

General Status and Operation of the Convention

What has been done since the 4MSP?

Focusing on our core humanitarian objectives:

A. Clearing mined land: I believe **Costa Rica** has been declared the first mine-affected country in the Americas to be free of AP mines. This is a significant step in the life of the Convention as Costa Rica becomes the first State Party, having reported mined areas, to have cleared them in accordance with Article 5. According to my figures, 44 States Parties might be affected by the impact of landmines. The SC on MC will give us the opportunity to hear the last update from mine-affected States with a view to ensuring that the 10-year period will be well used.

B. Destroying stockpiled mines: 1/3/03 is the first deadline foreseen in the Convention for the first 45 States Parties for which the Convention entered into force on 1/3/99. We will hear from the SC on SD the status of implementation on Thursday but the information, which the Co-Chairs conveyed to me, is that we are certainly on the right track.

C. Assisting victims: this is where the commitment of all governments being it affected or donor countries. Our co-chairs will have the opportunity to give us tomorrow the state of affairs on this fundamental item.

D. Universalizing the Convention: 131 = + 3: Gambia (R 23/9/02 had already presented its article 7 report), CAR (A 8/11/02), Cyprus (R 17/1/03). Greece has already ratified at the national level, Turkey has promised to start the accession process soon, and Lithuania has informed us that the process of ratification is on the good track. We will hear more about that important topic during the panel today and during the meeting of the Universalization Contact Group.

Taking action to achieve our objectives:

A. Exchanging Information:

In October, I had two working sessions with Mrs Tamara Malinova in New York to make the Website of article 7 more user-friendly and to facilitate the annual reports by implementing the concept of the cover page as described in Annex 3 of the Final Report of 4MSP.

Article 7: + 8 (Cameroon and Gambia which presented before the deadline), Congo, Djibouti, Dominica, Gabon, Ghana, Maldives bringing it to 103 the number of States having complied with their article 7 duties of an initial report. 21 States are still late and encouraged to comply as soon as feasible. We must add that Lithuania, a Signatory, voluntarily submitted its report bringing it now to 104 Article 7 reports formally submitted.

B. Mobilising resources:

During the 4MSP, we heard the commitment of Norway. In December in Ottawa, at the Symposium on the Fifth Anniversary of the Mine Ban Convention we heard the commitment of Canada. The new Contact Group on resource mobilization will be an opportunity to exchange views on that item.

C. Regional approaches:

On 24-25 October 2002, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in co-operation with the Croatian Mine Action Center and Croatia Without Mines Association organized in Dubrovnik, Croatia, a Seminar on Implementation measures of the Mine-Ban Convention in the South-East Europe Region.

On 4 and 5 November 2002, the ICRC organized in Moscow a regional conference attended by the the States of the Commonwealth of Independent States. During that meeting I had bilateral consultations with Tajikistan concentrating on article 7 and stockpile destruction. Belarus and Ukraine also informed us of the problem of destruction of PFM1 mines and their willingness to ratify or accede once this problem has been settled.

On 12 and 13 November 2002, our ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted the Brussels Seminar on Article 7 in Central Africa. The seminar aimed to raise awareness among African countries of the importance of the Mine Ban Treaty and Article 7 reporting. M. Louis Michel, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Vice-Prime Minister, addressed the opening session. Participants included representatives from Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Tanzania.

Actions to promote the universal acceptance of the Convention:

The newly created Bangkok Regional Action Group is an excellent initiative in the field of universalization with a view to the 5th MSP hosted in Thailand.

Belgium, in troika with Nicaragua and Thailand presented a resolution in October at the First Committee of the General Assembly to promote the universalization of the Convention. We had a record number of co-sponsors: 140 (123 SP, 11 signatories and 6 non-signatories). The vote in the General Assembly gave 143 Yes votes (among which 14 States which have not acceded to the convention) 0 No and 23 abstentions.

Belgium has also launched an initiative in the capitals of the European countries which have not acceded to the Convention and which will join soon the EU.