

Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

[HOME](#) > [Intersessional Work Programme](#) > [Sept., Dec. 1999 & Jan. 2000](#) > [Stockpile Destruction](#) >

MEETING REPORT

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Introduction

1. The Standing Committee of Experts on Stockpile Destruction, established by the First Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on their Destruction (Mine Ban Treaty), met in Geneva, Switzerland on December 9-10, 1999.
2. The Co-Chairs of the Committee are Hungary and Mali, the Co-Rapporteurs are Slovakia and Malaysia. The logistical support for the Committee Meeting was provided by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD).
3. At the First Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, held in May 1999 in Maputo, participants emphasised the need for the rapid universalisation of adherence to and compliance with the Convention and, parallelly, the importance of prompt and strict compliance with the obligations as stipulated in Article 4. Accordingly, States were urged to comply with their reporting obligations under Article 7 as a way to facilitate future co-operation between prospective donor States and those requesting assistance in carrying out this important task. In the course of its intersessional work, the Committee should seek ways to ensure that the capabilities and capacities of prospective donor States become fully compatible with the needs of States requesting assistance.
4. The Meeting had following four half-day sessions:
 - Stockpile Destruction as Integral Part of Mine Action,
 - Allocation of Resources - Technologies and Constraints,
 - Case Studies,
 - The way ahead.
5. More than 80 delegates, representing governments, intergovernmental organisations, international organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGO's), participated in the Meeting.
6. The Meeting was officially opened by Ambassador Godet, Director of the GICHD. In his statement, Ambassador Godet emphasised, *inter alia* the importance of the Meeting and pointed out the importance of the process of safe and quick destruction of APMs stocks for a mines free future.
7. Ms. Jody Williams of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, in her statement, emphasised that destruction stockpiled mines is critical in achieving the objective of eventual elimination of APMs. She referred to the destruction of stockpiled APMs as the most effective first step in ensuring that no new minefields are laid. Ms. Jody Williams had also presented the 24 page ICBL Fact Sheet, envisioned to contain regularly updated information on the issue, as well. She also called for establishing a clear timetable for compliance with Article 4 obligations and encouraged more countries that have completed to destroy their APM stockpiles to come forward with their experience and expertise. Such co-operative efforts could attract more donors to provide professional/technical/financial assistance for stockpile destruction.
8. The Meeting provided an opportunity for participants to deliberate a wide range of issues. Most of the topics were discussed and considered in depth because of the wide range of representatives and experts present. However, some of the issues which need further and more detailed elaboration and follow-up will be dealt with at a later stage. At the second meeting of the SCESD in May, Non-State Parties and Non-signatory States were also encouraged to participate and present their views.

I - Stockpile Destruction as Integral Part of Mine Action

9. The following issues were proposed for discussion: obligations and rights of countries under Article 4 of the Ottawa Convention, methods and technologies for destruction, transparency, monitoring, verification, technical and financial assistance, bilateral, regional and multilateral options.

10. Keynote address was presented by Ret. Gen. Gordon M. Reay (Canada) who also moderated this session.

11. Wide range of technical options for stockpile destruction was presented to the session for consideration. Generally, it was agreed that examination of all options and factors should lead to the destruction of all stocks in the fastest, most cost-effective way and with the least harmful effect to the environment. Those countries which have completed the destruction of their stockpiles should make their expertise available to those in need, because in many instances countries lack the technical experience, industrial capacities or know-how to carry out their obligations as stipulated in the Convention.

12. It was noted that the Convention deals with the issue of stockpile destruction in a manifold way. There are a number of Articles enumerating various forms of assistance, transparency measures, compliance facilitation, etc. With relevance to fulfilling the obligation of stockpile destruction.

13. By making a comparison between the military and commercial methods of stockpile destruction and taking into account all options/factors that these processes entail, it was argued, in most cases the cost of destruction at military facilities would be far less expensive than if the entire project was handled by commercial means.

14. However, whatever option is taken, or technology adopted, the sole objective remains that stockpile destruction must be complete, safe, quick and harmless to the environment.

15. Japan presented detailed information about her process of stockpile destruction. Various technologies applied give due regard to environmental concerns and, accordingly, they enjoy the full consent of local communities. Japan intends to retain 15,000 APMs for training purposes and the development of humanitarian de-mining technology for the period of 10 years. By the end of February 2003, all her stockpiles are to be destroyed.

16. Ukraine reiterated its political commitment to the full elimination of her huge stockpiles. Due to continuing cuts in the military budget, however, the accomplishment of her stated targets could be seriously undermined, thus, international assistance to her stockpile destruction plans was requested. In the context of possible international or regional co-operation on such projects the example of a proposed Canadian-Ukrainian project in stockpile destruction was highlighted. The hope was expressed that more and more countries will be in a position to assist states with similar problems to that of the Ukraine in the future.

17. Bosnia and Herzegovina recalled that the signing of the Dayton Agreement entails extensive responsibilities in the fields of humanitarian de-mining and stockpile destruction, as well. Accordingly, the country still invites the support of the international donor community to assist her in these tasks. Bosnia and Herzegovina is expected to achieve full compliance with the provisions of the Ottawa Convention by the year 2010.

18. The possible roles of UNMAS and UNDP in stockpile destruction projects were also discussed. With its 137 regional centres worldwide, the UNDP could facilitate various bilateral or multilateral arrangements with a view to promoting information exchange and technical/financial co-operation in this field. Although the UN agencies are traditionally involved in humanitarian de-mining activities, the possibility of expanding their activities to facilitate stockpile destruction should not be excluded. The ways and means of such UN involvement, e.g. transparency and lessons learned and shared, and financial assistance were also discussed.

19. The necessity and merits of retaining APMs for training purposes and promoting technological innovation, furthermore, the possibility of putting numerical caps in the size of respective stockpiles, were also debated. Concern was expressed with a view to the possibility that the retention of sizeable stockpiles may, in the final analysis, seriously undermine the credibility of the Convention, and dilute full and prompt compliance with Article 4 obligations. Still, the majority view of participants indicated that this issue could be more appropriately addressed by the SCE on the General Status and Operation of the Convention.

20. The representative from the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) was perturbed to find out that some countries are using live mine for training purposes. The Human Right Watch (HRW) also expressed its concern about the seemingly high number of APMs being retained by certain countries for training purposes (15,000 by Japan and 17,500 by Croatia) and questioned the rationale for retaining mines in such big numbers.

21. Foreign stockpiles of APMs should be target of destruction, as well and this Committee should come back to this issue.

22. A list of companies, experts and technologies available for their evaluation by prospective "donors" and "recipients" should be prepared. There are resources to provide funding for stockpile destruction. A

cumulative list of companies, experts and technologies could provide necessary link between the "donor" and "recipient" countries.

23. The merits and shortcomings of military to military co-operation, regarded in most cases as probably the most efficient way of establishing bilateral co-operative structures in stockpile destruction were also discussed. However, any other possibilities, including multilateral co-operative frameworks, should also be explored. Participation of other regional organisations (e.g. NATO, OAS, etc.) should be encouraged at the next meetings.

II - Allocation of Resources-Technologies and Constraints

24. The following issues were proposed for discussion: the role of the military and private sector in stockpile destruction, logistical, technical and financial considerations, possible alternatives to the current methods of stockpile destruction, choosing the appropriate method with a view to the size, composition and age of the stockpiles to be destroyed.

25. Keynote speaker and moderator of this session was Mr. Patrick Blagden (GICHD).

26. A presentation on the actions needed in eliminating stockpiles was introduced and a comparison was made between the converging or diverging approaches taken by the military and civil sectors in this regard. In most cases, it was argued, stockpile destruction in military facilities leads to a substantial reduction of incurred expenses and entails the more efficient utilization of already existing resources. Transparency in this process is also of critical importance, a fact about which the armed forces should be educated. The possibility of negative environmental impacts brought about by the destruction process should not be used as an excuse for inaction in meeting Article 4 obligations.

27. Slovakia provided information on the merits of her chosen method for stockpile destruction. After considering all the circumstances, the delaboration method of destruction was preferred. Destruction in military facility enabled the substantial reduction of expenses of this process.

28. It was pointed out that the issue of UXO could deserve further consideration, although not in the context of the Standing Committee of Experts on Stockpile Destruction, but within a more appropriate framework.

29. When it comes to deliberating the preferred method(s) of stockpile destruction, a reasonable balance should be maintained in the choice of destroying „simple,, and „sophisticated,, APMs.

30. It was proposed that case studies on stockpile destruction should be made available at a designated website database.

31. In order to facilitate the future work of the Standing Committees of Experts, the issue of enhanced logistical support for the Ottawa process should be raised, including the implementation of a somewhat more institutionalised framework such as, among others, building various databases.

32. Austria recalled that the destruction of stockpiles in the country was completed by 1995, following the declaration of an export moratorium on APMs in October 1994 and prior to the adoption of the "Federal Law on the Ban of Anti Personnel Mines" by the Austrian Parliament in 1996.

33. The United Kingdom announced its intention to help prepare a matrix of options with a view to assist countries in choosing the most appropriate method warranted by the size and composition and technical specifications of their stockpiles.

34. Members of SCE Bureau should prepare letters to address those with experience in the stockpile destruction. Hand-out questionnaire on experience with stockpile destruction was also considered, either separately or as an attachment with the demarches regarding Article 7 reports, as prepared by Canada.

III - Case Studies

35. The following issues were proposed for discussion: merits and constraints of various methods of destruction as experienced by individual countries, environmental considerations, planning and implementation of the process leading up to the actual destruction of stockpiles, stockpile maintenance programs, including stockpiles in non-State Parties.

36. Keynote speaker and moderator of the third session was the Col. Paul Power (Australia).

37. A detailed account of the Australian perspective on stockpile destruction was presented. Australia decided to retain 10.000 APMs for the next 5 years for its training requirements. While considering the most effective method, in the destruction of APMs, the highest priorities taken into account were safety and cost effectiveness. The role of public involvement and the media was also emphasised.

38. Croatia provided her case study presentation on the stockpile destruction process. The country, however, is faced with the problem of lack of funds, advanced technology procedures and delaborating facilities. All APMs should be destroyed within 4 years. Offers of technical assistance from other countries in the region would be certainly appreciated.

39. Although the destruction of fuses and related issues are not specifically referred to in the Convention, a large number of countries are repackaging explosives, hence further consideration of this question is necessary.

40. Italy has also presented a case study about her experiences with stockpile destruction. The country is expected to destroy about 1.6 million APMs by the end of 1999. Destruction of the remaining APM stockpiles should be completed by the end of 2001, although the national law stipulates the deadline of November 2002.

41. Nicaragua also made a presentation of her case study on the experiences drawn from her destruction of APM stockpiles. By the year 2002 the country should be free of all APM stockpiles. In this connection the active engagement of civil society in the destruction process was highlighted.

42. Several other countries also presented their views on various related issues and divulged information on the size of APM stockpiles intended for retention.

43. Regional co-operation and information exchange could also facilitate the speedy elimination of stockpiles, since countries in a peculiar region with shared military experiences may hold sometimes very similar, if not identical types of APMs. The countries in a particular region with destruction facilities should consider their assistance to countries without such destruction capabilities.

44. An important role should be assigned to players outside the military to ensure maximum transparency in the process of stockpile destruction (governmental agencies, mass media, diplomatic corps, etc.).

45. So called "problem countries" should be more actively engaged in the work of the Standing Committee of Experts on Stockpile Destruction, as well as in the other Standing Committees.

IV - The way ahead

46. The following issues were proposed for discussion: possible mechanisms for linking up donor and recipient countries, funding of stockpile destruction projects, compilation of a database of industrial/research capacities and capabilities, possible mechanism for monitoring and evaluating Article 7 of the reports, possible mechanism for engaging non-States Parties in reducing their stockpiles, progress report on global stockpiles and their destruction.

47. Keynote speaker and moderator of this session was Stephen Goose (Human Rights Watch, USA).

48. The discussion in this session focused on the establishment of an action plan, concrete steps to be taken from now on until the next meeting in May 2000, and between May 2000 and September 2000.

49. Expert meeting for the evaluation of options available for stockpile destruction should be convened and financial assistance for the organization of such a meeting should be considered. This meeting, even though involving a smaller number of countries, would need to be considered in the context of the heavy workload and limited personnel capacities of some delegations.

50. The submission of (annual) progress reports on stockpile destruction is not a matter of consensus at this point of time. Inclusion of the issue of mandatory progress reports on stockpile destruction on the agenda of the next Annual Meeting of State Parties was proposed. There are a number of questions not included in the Article 7 reporting format and a number of countries have not yet observed their Article 7 reporting obligation. Therefore, a proposal for a separate questionnaire on stockpile destruction was entertained. The proposal should be further consulted with UNMAS.

51. The Second Annual Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention should discuss and reach conclusions relating to the Article 7 reports, stockpiles destruction and further reporting obligations.

52. Meeting appreciated important role the ICBL Landmine Monitor plays in reporting on the global stockpile destruction process and contributing to greater transparency on this important issue.

53. A proposal to convene a ministerial Conference to discuss and reach conclusions concerning Article 7 reports and stockpiles destruction was made. The high-level attendance at the States Parties Meetings may provide a better place for such decisions. Others would prefer consideration of these issues in the framework of the SCE on the General Status and Implementation of the Convention.

Conclusions

54. The main task of this Meeting was to identify, on the basis of the broadest possible consensus, the areas of high priority for future consideration and action by the Committee.

55. The Meeting encouraged all States that have not yet done so to submit their reports under the Article 7.

56. Some countries presented their case studies from national destruction programmes of stockpiled APMs and responded to the follow-up questions. Presentations proved the need for detailed preparation and planning process. Environmental challenges should be also taken into consideration to minimise the impact of stockpile destruction.

57. It was agreed that follow-up actions would be undertaken by the Committee in preparing for the Second Meeting of States Parties, scheduled in September 2000, in Geneva.

58. The May Meeting will consider the progress made and decide on the contents of the report and recommendations for submission to the States Parties Meeting in September.

59. Delegations stressed the importance and necessity of international assistance and invited bilateral, multilateral or regional assistance, whether financial or technical. Some countries offered their capacities and assistance.
60. Bilateral military to military co-operations are preferred option for joint actions in stockpile destruction, but there is still some potential for the UN system and regional multilateral efforts (e.g. NATO, OAS, OAU, etc.). The representatives of regional organisations should be invited and encouraged to attend the next meeting.
61. Need for technical and financial assistance should be accompanied by the mechanism that would guarantee the flow from donors to recipients. UNDP could play facilitating role in matching donor and recipient countries.
62. A compilation of the presentations (case studies) and the website database was discussed. Database could include a list of countries, companies, individual experts, costs involved scale, etc. Number of countries expressed their wish to provide financial and technical assistance to this idea.
63. The Co-chairs shall address the countries that already started or even completed the destruction of their respective stockpiles to invite them to share their experience from stockpile destruction. Co-chairmen shall also address those not presented at this meeting to encourage their presence at next meetings.
64. Next meeting of the Standing Committee of Experts on Stockpile Destruction will be held on 22-23 May 2000. It is the intention of the Co-Chairs to convene at least 2 informal meeting for the agenda and programme consideration (possibly in February and April 2000) prior to May meeting.

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