



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

PROGRESS IN MEETING THE AIMS OF THE OTTAWA CONVENTION IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

THE 2004 REAY GROUP WORKSHOP

Progress in meeting the aims of the Ottawa Convention in South Eastern Europe:

**Bucharest
2-3 February 2004**

Chair's Summary

Introduction:

The Reay Group Workshop, *Progress in meeting the aims of the Ottawa Convention in South Eastern Europe*, was held 2-3 February 2004. It was hosted by the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, convened by the Chair of the Reay Group, Ambassador Sergiu Celac of Romania, and supported by the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining. The purpose of the workshop was to focus on progress in implementing all aspects of the Ottawa Convention by the States Parties to it in South Eastern Europe in light of the Convention's First Review Conference. It featured an assessment of progress and challenges in the States Parties' efforts to clear mined areas, assist victims, destroy stockpiled mines, establish national implementation measures, exchange information and generate necessary resources in a manner consistent with the provisions of the Convention.

Opening of the workshop:

Reay Group Chair Ambassador Sergiu Celac opened the Workshop by noting that by the time of *the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World* later this year, South Eastern Europe will be in a position to report a positive record of achievements with respect to the Convention. In addition, he emphasized the value provided by the Reay Group to the effort in the region by serving as an open forum for meaningful exchange of information and best practices. In his opening statement, Ambassador Mihnea Constantinescu remarked on both the progress that has been made to date in the implementation of the Convention in South Eastern Europe as well as the challenges which remain. He highlighted in particular the fact that full implementation of all the provisions of the Convention is essential for the achievement of the Convention's core objectives.

Ambassador Chaiyong Satjipanon of Thailand delivered a statement on behalf of His Excellency Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand – the President of the Fifth Meeting of the States Parties (5MSP). It was noted that the importance of regional approaches was highlighted in the President's Action Programme of the 5MSP. In addition, it was noted that Thailand hopes that countries in other regions will follow the example set by the Reay Group and that it is committed to promoting such regional initiatives. Ambassador Pieter Jan Wolthers of the Netherlands also commended Romania for its efforts to facilitate a regional dialogue and informed the Workshop of the Netherlands' longstanding commitment to support mine action in the region and elsewhere.

Setting Regional Implementation Targets

Reay Group Chair Ambassador Sergiu Celac emphasized the value of the States Parties in the region themselves identifying how they will define success in time for the Review Conference.

Workshop Session I: Clearing Mined Areas

An exchange of information on clearing mined areas was preceded by a keynote address by Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi of Japan, Co-Chair of the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Mine Action Technologies. Ambassador Inoguchi emphasized the importance of dialogue at all levels – international, regional and national levels – in order to fully implement the Convention. In addition, it was noted that there is a need to develop appropriate technologies to meet humanitarian aims, including the aim of clearing landmines.

Five South Eastern European States Parties provided updates on their problems, plans and progress pertaining to the fulfillment of the obligation to clear mined areas during a session which was facilitated by mine clearance expert Paul Collinson of Norwegian Peoples Aid.

- Albania reported that a majority of contaminated areas in the country have been cleared and that it is projected that Article 5 could be fully implemented by 2008 or sooner.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina noted that although the challenges it faced were huge, these could be overcome within the timelines indicated in Article 5 – but at a huge expense. It also reported that later this year Bosnia and Herzegovina will adopt a Poverty Reduction Strategy, which will prominently feature mine action.
- Croatia indicated that while some outside assistance is still required, 85 percent of demining costs in the country are covered by the State budget. It also reported that Croatia has developed mine action technologies which have caught international interest and that Croatia has made use of national celebrities to raise public awareness.
- The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia emphasized that since 2001 mine clearance has been one of the Government's priorities, that it recently took over national control of UN-prepared mine action programme, and that clearance continues in distant areas.
- Greece indicated that it has already cleared minefields along the Greek-Bulgarian border, that it is in the process of clearing the area along the Albanian border and that it is conducting the necessary technical / economic studies to accomplish full implementation of Article 5 within the Convention's timelines.

Workshop Session II: Assisting Victims

The Workshop session was opened by the facilitator, Ambassador Zeljko Kupresak of Croatia noting that the exchange of information on victim assistance is especially important given that without a concrete obligation contained in the Convention each individual State Party needs to define its responsibility to provide for the care, rehabilitation and reintegration of landmine survivors. Three States Parties proceeded with sharing information on this matter:

- Albania noted that the number of landmine survivors in Albania numbers into the hundreds and that assisting these individuals is compounded by the poverty faced by populations in the country. In addition, it was highlighted that outside assistance has come from a variety of sources, including Slovenia, the International Trust Fund and the ICRC.
- Croatia informed the workshop of the commencement of operations, later this year, of its regional centre for psycho-social rehabilitation. In addition it highlighted the role of the Croatian Mine Victims Association, which is providing landmine survivors with a greater voice in communicating their needs. As well, it noted efforts to create a full register of mine victims.
- Serbia and Montenegro indicated that the number of landmine survivors numbers into the hundreds. For example, the Institute for Prosthetics during 1991 to 1998 recorded that 1,600 individuals made initial visits with 402 of these being landmine victims. Initial steps are being examined to better assist these individuals.

Expert Respondent Sheree Bailey of the ICBL, the author of a study on victim assistance in the region which was commissioned by the International Trust Fund, provided some variety of remarks given her

in-depth knowledge of the region. It was noted that key issues in the region include: access to appropriate and affordable health care and rehabilitation facilities; the need to improve and upgrade existing facilities; a lack of opportunities for economic reintegration; the need for capacity building / training of health care providers; the need to establish effective social welfare systems and legislation; the need for resources to support facilities and programs; and, the need to raise awareness on the rights and needs of persons with disabilities.

Workshop Session III: Destroying Stockpiled Mines

Workshop facilitator Luigi Scotto of Italy, Co-Chair of the Standing Committee on Stockpile Destruction, noted that most of the States Parties in the region already had fulfilled their obligations under Article 4 of the Convention. Of those still in the process of doing so, two provided updates on their stockpile destruction efforts:

- Romania reported that of an initial stockpile of 1,076,839 anti-personnel mines, the vast majority has already been destroyed and that destruction will be complete by the end of March – approximately one year in advance of Romania’s deadline for destruction.
- Serbia and Montenegro highlighted the magnitude of the challenge it faces in destroying its stockpile and illustrated that stockpile destruction is an element of the Convention which warrants the assistance of others.
- In addition, in a previous session Greece noted that it was conducting the necessary technical and economic studies in order to fulfill its Article 4 obligation in accordance with its deadline.

Workshop Session IV: Preventing and Suppressing Prohibited Activities

An exchange of information and views on legal, administrative and other measures in accordance with Article 9 was preceded by a presentation on the Article by ICRC legal expert, Robert Young. It was emphasized that the Article 9 obligations apply to all States Parties, that there are both general obligations and a specific obligation (i.e., establish penal sanctions), that the application of these obligations naturally would differ from State-to-State, and that the ICRC was available to assist those in the process of establishing measures in accordance with the Article.

Romania provided a detailed illustration of the measures it has taken in accordance with Article 9, highlighting both relevant national legislation as well as relevant steps taken by the armed forces to ensure full implementation of the Convention.

Workshop Session V: Exchanging Information

The Manager of the Implementation Support Unit of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, Kerry Brinkert, reminded the Workshop of the emphasis that the States Parties had placed on need to exchange information in advance of the Review Conference. He highlighted the fact that States Parties, in advance of the Review Conference, have at their disposal a formal information exchange mechanism – Article 7 reporting – and an informal mechanism – the Intersessional Work Programme. South Eastern European States Parties were advised to maximize the potential of these mechanisms. In addition, they were encouraged to ensure that the regional continued with its stellar 100 percent Article 7 reporting rate. As well, the importance of building public awareness about mine action objectives and of a constructive partnership with the media was emphasized.

Workshop Session VI: Assessing Needs and the Domestic Responses to Needs

Radu Horumba of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs facilitated a session intended to provide States Parties in the region with an opportunity to highlight their needs as well as the domestic responses to these needs. Two States Parties took advantage of this opportunity:

- Albania reported that US\$ 6.6 million is required in 2004, with approximately two-thirds of this already having been identified. Albania also noted its own national commitment to addressing its problems associated with mines and UXO – commitments which include the aim of establishing by 2006 an Albanian national capacity to manage its programme.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina reported that of the € 44 million required in 2004, Bosnia and Herzegovina itself had invested € 6.6 million. Bosnia and Herzegovina highlighted that in 2004 it is increasing its technical survey, general survey, clearance and marking efforts.

Workshop Session VII: Responding to Needs

Reay Group Chair Ambassador Sergiu Celac facilitated a session during which input was provided from States Parties and organizations in a position to provide assistance to meet the needs of the States Parties in the region. Four States Parties provided updates: Canada, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands. In addition, input was provided by the International Trust Fund, the European Commission, the United Nations and the ICRC.

Many speakers highlighted their commitment to the region, that assistance is available for all aspects of implementation (including for stockpile destruction, transparency reporting and the establishment of national implementation measures), and that addressing the suffering of anti-personnel mines is achievable if all partners continue to place a priority on their Article 6 obligations.

The Road to the Review Conference

Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch of Austria, President-Designate of the First Review Conference, provided a detailed update on preparations for *the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World* – the name that has been given to the Review Conference. He noted that he had proposed to the States Parties that they work towards the following substantive outcomes: (1) a comprehensive review of progress towards the Convention's core humanitarian aims, drawing conclusions on implementation of the Convention if necessary; (2) most importantly, a forward-looking action plan on how to achieve the Convention's aims in the five-years following the Review Conference; (3) a strong political declaration; and, (4) decisions on how to organize the future work (Meetings of States Parties, Intersessional Meetings, et cetera).

Ambassador Petritsch also noted that communicating a strong, coherent and consistent message concerning the Review Conference will be vital. This will be necessary in order to bring the landmine issue back into the public awareness; create some momentum; point out that something of significance will happen in Nairobi; and, ultimately, to ensure that the effort will translate into the renewed commitments necessary to ensure that the Convention lives up to its promise.

For its part, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) shared some expectations it has for the Review Conference. ICBL representative Sylvie Brigot highlighted that it was hoped that by the time of the Review Conference 150 States will have joined the Convention, that armed non-state actors will have been encouraged to accept the Convention's standards, that understanding would have been reached on the interpretation of various articles of the Convention, and that significant progress will have made in destroying stockpiled mines, assisting victims clearing mined areas and establishing measures in accordance with Article 9. In addition, the ICBL argued that the full implementation of the Convention will require renewed political and financial commitments.

Closing Remarks

The Chairs closed the Workshop by expressing his satisfaction with the way that the Workshop had lived up to its promise as an effective regional forum to report on progress and identify challenges. He expressed his hope that the Reay Group Workshop would serve as a catalyst for further progress that can be made by the time of the Nairobi Summit and to identify in concrete terms the further efforts which will be necessary following the Review Conference.