

Statement by Poland and Norway at the III Review Conference for the Mine Ban Convention 23rd June, 2014. Stockpile destruction.

Thank you, Mr. President.

On behalf of Norway and Poland, as co-chairs of the standing committee on Stockpile Destruction, let me highlight the remarkable efforts that the States Parties collectively have done to destroy anti-personnel landmines.

The Mine Ban Convention was ground-breaking in many ways. Importantly, it was the first time in history that a treaty prohibited the use and required the destruction of a weapon that was in widespread use around the world. The Mine Ban Convention bans stockpiling of anti-personnel mines and requires that a state destroy existing stocks within four years of the entry into force of the Convention.

Since the entry into force of the Mine Ban Convention, 87 States Parties have officially declared that they have completed the destruction of their stockpiles. Another 63 States Parties have declared never possessing anti-personnel mines. Together the States Parties have destroyed over 47 million mines as of the end of 2013. That is indeed a great and important achievement and we would like to commend all States Parties that have contributed to this result.

However, still, nearly 11 million anti-personnel mines await destruction by six States Parties. Belarus, Finland, Greece, Guinea-Bissau, Poland and Ukraine. In addition Somalia, which initially declared not to possess any antipersonnel mines, is now in the process of assessing and confirming whether they currently possess any such stockpiles. Both Finland and Poland are making good progress in the destruction and are expected to finish the job well before their deadlines.

Belarus, Greece and Ukraine have failed to comply with the Convention by not completing the destruction of their stockpiles by their four-year deadline. Belarus and Greece had a deadline of 1 March 2008, while Ukraine had a deadline of 1 June 2010.

As co-chairs we are, however, pleased to say that we in the recent weeks have seen some very positive developments. We are looking forward to further updates here today.

Earlier this month, Greece announced that it has made significant advances in the destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines in accordance with its obligations under the Convention. We wish to commend Greece for, despite various problems and challenges, demonstrating determination to finish the job.

Regarding Belarus, a center to destroy anti-personnel mines opened in Rechitsa in May. We are very pleased with this development, and indeed hope and expect that the destruction itself will commence as soon as possible and proceed as fast as possible.

Regarding the stockpile destruction in the Ukraine, we acknowledge the destruction of over 300,000 PFM-1 mines last year and that 576 anti-personnel mines have been disposed so far in 2014. We are nevertheless concerned about the high numbers of stockpiled anti-

personnel mines remaining in the Ukraine and the delays in commencing the destruction of the 3 million PFM-1 mines within the NATO Partnership for Peace Project. We hope that all partners involved– the Ukraine, the European Commission and the NATO Supply Agency – can finalise all the necessary agreements so that destruction under this project can begin as soon as possible. We also hope for the early progress in destruction of POM-2 or OZM-4 mines which are not part of the mentioned project and should have been destroyed on time.

We would like to stress the need to place a high national priority on finishing stock pile destruction in the shortest possible timeframe. It is our sincere hope that the recent progress will continue with full speed and that the momentum will continue and intensify until all stockpile destruction obligations have been met.

Stockpile destruction is a core obligation in the Convention. It is essential that mines are destroyed to prevent their use and save lives and limbs, but will also be much cheaper, safer, and easier to do than destroying them once they have been planted in the ground. Eradicating anti-personnel mine stockpiles is preventive mine action. If there are no stocks, there will be no use.

Thank you, Mr. President.