

International Cooperation and Assistance

John MacBride (CAN)

Article 6 of the Convention establishes the right for States Parties to seek and receive assistance and obligates States Parties to provide that assistance, if they are in a position to do so. In that respect, Article 6 is a very important obligation that significantly strengthens the CCM and provides a framework for successful implementation.

Canada was one of the few states that have engaged actively in assisting States Parties in the destruction of stockpiles of anti-personnel mines. The aim of the presentation is to generate discussion as to how to operationalize Article 6 for the provision of assistance for the destruction of stockpiled munitions. It will briefly describe the Canadian programme, briefly mention chosen technologies and conclude with examples of the implementation mechanisms established to carry out this assistance.

In 2000, Canada established an informal stockpile destruction sub programme within the Canadian Landmine Fund aimed at providing the essential financial and/or technical and/or material support necessary so that States Parties could fulfill their Ottawa Convention Article 4 obligations not later than their deadline. The programme has supported some 24 countries to date.

Projects have ranged from very small, less than 4000 mines, to larger and more complicated projects, involving the destruction of more than a million mines. Sixteen of the projects were supported only by Canada and the remaining eight involved more than one donor.

The assistance Canada provided included technical assistance in developing national stockpile destruction plans and in the actual execution of those plans. This assistance was provided by ammunition technical experts from the Department of National Defence, and through recognized international expertise and Non Governmental Organizations whose participation was arranged by Canada. In addition to technical support, the programme also provided material support when needed ranging from the provision of donor explosive for open detonation to the provision of equipment such as computers to properly record the information. Finally, it also included the provision of financial assistance.

Twenty countries destroyed their mines through open detonation and four through demilitarization, primarily disassembly. The countries that completed their destruction through open detonation generally held relatively small quantities of mines that would not have been economically viable to destroy through other methods. The bench mark was that as quantities approached a million mines, it was less expensive to destroy the mines through other technologies.

In the destruction of cluster munitions unless held in small quantities, it is likely that many States Parties will opt for technologies other than open detonation.

Additionally many states have environmental regulations that would preclude such methods. Alternative technologies could include contained detonation, plasma arc incineration, cryofracture and perhaps others – all of which are likely to be expensive. In the development of the concept to establish the Canadian stockpile destruction programme, it was evident that our Mine Action Team did not possess the technical expertise to directly develop and manage these projects. As a consequence projects were implemented with the following partners:

Department of National Defence - The military possess the technical skills needed to conduct destruction of stocks on this scale, primarily through Ammunition Technical Officers and Non Commissioned Officers but occasionally through military engineers.

NATO PfP Trust Fund Process - Another most important implementing mechanism has been the NATO Partnership for Peace Trust Fund Process. The Canadian delegation to NATO worked with the NATO International Staff and the NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency to develop the process and Canada was the lead nation for the first project in Albania.

Other partners included UNDP - eight projects, the GICHD as a partner in project development – two projects, the OAS as a Partner – seven projects, the Stability Pact for- South Eastern Europe – one project, and NGOs as partners – one project and one pilot project.

In summary, Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs recognized early on that it did not, on its own, possess the necessary skill sets to plan and execute multiple stockpile destruction projects. Rather we sought partners who could provide this expertise, developed appropriate contractual arrangements with them, and provided the resources to bring these projects to fruition.

For those that are in a position to provide assistance in stockpile destruction, and who do not possess the in house expertise, Canada's experience with the military, NATO, the UN, the OAS, the Stability Pact, the GICHD and various NGOs may prove a useful to you in establishing your programmes.

Stockpile destruction of cluster munitions will undoubtedly pose a greater challenge than land mines, and no doubt the cost will be greater and the technology chosen may well be different, but the methodology to develop and implement a cluster munitions stockpile destruction assistance project will be similar to that of landmines or any other munitions destruction activity.