First Workshop on Regional Approaches to Stockpile Reduction in Southeast Europe

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insufficient consideration of the presence of landmine/ERW hazards in their area. While projects may begin with limited awareness of the potential problem, part of all of a project may be brought to a halt when landmines are encountered. This realization may also require that the project reconsider individual beneficiaries, since the effects of landmines can be catastrophic. Problems could be avoided with better use of information and appropriate planning.

The threat of landmine contamination may affect the specific plans of many sectors, including transportation (roads, bridges and railways), power (electricity generation and distribution), water, agriculture and social sectors (education, health and social welfare). Sector requirements for mine action are often not clearly reflected in national mine-action plans, and sector development plans often do not reflect sector needs for demining services. With more use of mine-action information, there is a greater chance that the need to resolve potential landmine problems will be incorporated into the national plans.

When landmines and ERW are not considered, the broad mission of a development organization may be compromised. There were several reports of government and NGO programs covering multiple areas in which mine-affected communities were excluded because there were insufficient funds in the program budget. This occurred most commonly with programs addressing rehabilitation or investment in a specific capacity (e.g., irrigation, schools and health centers) in which a minority of the candidate communities had landmine problems. When no funds had been allocated to mine action, organizations were more likely to achieve program goals by selecting non-mine-affected communities. Landmine information was considered during planning, alternative funding might have been found to resolve the landmine problems.

Mine-action planning is made more difficult when development operators, having not considered landmine problems during their own project-planning stage, encounter landmine obstacles that must be removed before their project can continue. This discovery often results in an urgent request for demining support. It is imperative for mine action to be considered during the development project-planning phase and incorporated into the annual demining planning process.

Some organizations avoid working in mine-affected communities until given assurance that it is safe to do so. They are often risk-averse and only willing to work in hazardous areas with the guarantee of full clearance—

which may require expensive clearance assets where they were not otherwise needed. Encouraged use of mine-action information by development organizations would reduce wasted clearance efforts.

Causes of Insufficient Use of Information

While the range of development organizations that could make sufficient use of mine-action information is large, the set of organizations using such information is much smaller. Several respondents of the SAC survey stated that the landmine problem is widely known by all actors; more indicated that, although there is general awareness of the problem by those working in the mine-affected region, this does not necessarily mean that they are aware of or consider the specific hazards in the area where they are planning to work, nor that their headquarters are informed. Even organizations reasonably well-informed about the problems often are not aware of the time required to survey and remove the respective hazards. In general, lack of use of mine-action information may be due to the following factors:

- There is a lack of knowledge of the mine problem and its relation to development activities.
- Organizations are unaware of the information that exists or where to find it.
- Much more widespread problem than mine-action organizations realize, in spite of public information efforts.
- Often the total amount of land blocked by landmines is not large enough even when the countries are highly contaminated.
- Many development organizations could carry out the full range of their activities and never encounter landmines.
- Community-development organizations generally select priorities for reasons other than mine action.
- Many organizations dealing with local infrastructure and services have the option to shift to other sites, rather than rehabilitate a facility or area affected by mines.
- Mine action information may be overwhelming in detail or format and development organizations may not know how to select what is relevant.
- Development organizations may not know how to use landmine information because they do not deal with it frequently enough.
- Many international development organizations assume that it is the responsibility of the national authorities to ensure that any demining required for externally financed projects is done on a timely basis.
- Development organizations do not understand the process of prioritizing sites for clearance.

Next Steps

Phase 1 of this project confirmed wide agreement among national mine-action programs that it is important to enhance the use of mine-action information by development partners. It also provided a map of potential client organizations and their information needs. In Phase 2, SAC will work with three national mine-action programs and consult with a range of development organizations. This collaboration will help identify the organizations’ specific information needs and prepare targeted information products to increase the overall availability and usefulness of the information. In general, this will also propose central-government policies to ensure that landmine information is considered in the planning and financing of development projects.

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Participants

The workshop had more than 50 participants, with senior-level Croatian General Staff and Ministry of Defense officials, as well as representatives from a range of international organizations and countries. Participants included:

- The U.S. Ambassador to Croatia, Robert Bradtke, of the United States.
- The U.S. Department of State and NATO’s Maintenance and Supply Agency representatives.
- Croatian General Staff and Ministry of Defense officials.
- Representatives from the Ministries of Defense and General Staffs of Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia also attended the event.
- Members of the Adriatic Charter’s September 2008 Chiefs of Defense Conference, when officially recognized that a regional approach might improve efficiency and extend limited resources to address the dual threats of illicit proliferation and accidental explosion.

A for a history of conflicts and the military build-up of weapons and ammunition in Southeast Europe, the region now faces serious problems from the presence of and need to reduce excess, unstable and loosely secured conventional weapons and munitions. Illustrating the dangers are explosions in recent years of ammunition stockpiles in Albania, Bulgaria and Serbia, which have resulted in considerable damage, in addition to killing scores of civilians and displacing hundreds. To begin to address these issues, the first South East Europe Regional Approach to Stockpile Reduction workshop was held 5–7 May in Zagreb, Croatia.

This SEE RASR workshop was the first of a series of regional workshops developed to initiate discussions regarding national and regional plans for stockpile reduction and management. This regional approach is a concept born from the Adriatic Charter’s September 2008 Chiefs of Defense Conference, when officially recognized that a regional approach might improve efficiency and extend limited resources to address the dual threats of illicit proliferation and accidental explosion.

Topics and Discussions

The first day of the Zagreb workshop focused on threats and responses in the region. The U.S. Ambassador to Croatia, Robert Bradtke, offered opening remarks noting that a coordinated regional approach to stockpile reduction is crucial and requires three things: addressing the threat proactively by remediating landmines, designing weapons that are more efficient, and being committed to regional cooperation by approaching stockpile reduction as a threat affecting the whole region of neighbors. Peer Simonovic, Croatian Minister of Defense State Secretary, welcomed the workshop attendees, observing that stockpile reduction is significant for a variety of reasons, including security concerns related to international terrorism and national crime, as well as humanitarian issues in communities.

The remainder of the first day consisted of speakers and panels addressing threats and responses to stockpiles. Small arms and explosive-ordnance experts discussed the global and regional threats of excess weapons and unstable munitions. A panel of regional representatives examined recent explosions in the region—including

- Government representatives from the U.S. Departments of State and Defense
- Government representatives from Germany and Hungary

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day concluded with a panel of speakers from the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs’ Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State, and the NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency, which summarized existing efforts, guidelines and best practices related to the reduction and “right sizing” of stockpiles.

The focus on the second day was national and regional coordination in Southeast Europe. Representatives from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro offered details of their countries’ national policies and plans for stockpile security and reduction. Speakers from three international organizations (NATO, OSCE and SEESAC) discussed how their organizations are assisting specific nations (NATO, OSCE and SEESAC) discussed how their organizations are assisting specific nations among actors involved in conventional-arms reduction.

The workshop culminated with participants breaking into small working groups to talk face-to-face about realistic options and opportunities for stockpile coordination related to Southeast European stockpile-reduction efforts and safety.

Participants identified five priority issues where the RASR can facilitate greater coordination among actors involved in conventional-weapons reduction:

1. National and regional policy
2. Infrastructure
3. Training, education, and capacity building
4. Best practices and information sharing
5. Standardization

Outcomes

As the groups reassembled at the end of the workshop and reported on their discussion points, ideas and themes were presented, discussed and summarized by workshop facilitators. In conjunction with the first

such as deactivation events or stockpile security improvements to create momentum and political will for further stockpile-reduction efforts.

Training, education and capacity building. Training, education and capacity building are other important vehicles for fostering a regional approach to stockpile reduction. Not only will such efforts enhance domestic and regional technical expertise, promote greater understanding and support from policymakers and increase access to national and regional resources, but joint training will also help build trust among the militaries and defense ministries of the region. The main obstacles to regional capacity are the lack of knowledge and regional coordination.

Initially, all best-practice documents and guides should be translated into the languages of the region to increase accessibility. The establishment of a central repository for best practices, lessons learned, and related documents could provide a forum for information sharing and collaboration. The development of shared training syllabi and facilities would not only cut costs, but also provide an important tool for sharing knowledge and building trust. The region could consider establishing physical security and stockpile management and conventional weapons deactivation as a recurring part of the technical-level conferences held for experts in the region.

Sharing of information and best practices. Participants recognized the need for information exchange, transparency in technical and policy mechanisms, and enhanced regional coordination of practices where appropriate. In the short term, participants recommended a collaborative study on national capabilities and procedures specific to Southeast Europe. To enhance cooperation, the region could establish informal working groups at various levels in the technical, management and policy arenas to share area-specific practices. In the long term, establishing an informal Group of Governmental Experts could be used to consolidate and coordinate these practices.

Standardization. The region recognized the need for shared stockpile classifications standards, common munitions surveillance systems and national points of contact. Low levels of trust between governments and a lack of coordination are obstacles to this kind of information sharing. Navigating conflicting domestic laws and regulations will also prove to be difficult. The SEESAC maintains a database of national points of contact with responsibility over small-arms policies and programs. To improve coordination in the short term, governments should work with SEESAC to maintain an up-to-date database. In the medium term, it would be helpful to undertake a comprehensive study of what components of national stockpiles need to be classified as United Nations’ standards. In the long term, the region could establish an informal Group of Governmental Experts to consolidate and coordinate these practices.

National and regional policy. Participants identified several issues related to national and regional policy and programs that have hindered a regional approach to stockpile reduction. These include the lack of understanding and support from national policy-makers, particularly in the legislatures, variations and conflicts in national laws, policies and regulations, and a lack of donor coordination, leading to gaps and overlaps in bilateral and multilateral projects. Further complicating the pursuit of a regional approach are low levels of trust between governments, low levels of commitment among political leaders and requirements for the use of funding.

To address these challenges in the short term, participants agreed that conventional-weapons destruction should be a recurring agenda item during regular high-level conferences of Defense Ministers and Chiefs of Defense in the region. They also suggested re-instituting the South Eastern Europe Regional Implementation Plan, which was agreed to in 2001 and since then implemented by the Southeast Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons. Rather than reinventing the wheel, this restored focus would enable regional governments to build on existing policies in order to secure regional cooperation. In the long term, there need to be greater efforts are needed to educate lawmakers and policymakers about the threat of excess, unstable, and loosely secured conventional weapons and munitions. These awareness-raising efforts should be based on findings obtained from independent research on the scope of the problem. One aim could be to organize a regional summit on this issue at which donors are present, and make pledges that will ensure a successful outcome.

infrastructure. Infrastructure is another vehicle that can facilitate a regional approach. Participants recommended building and/or updating facilities, identifying facilities that can serve as a base for destruction centers, improving maintenance of facilities and personnel systems, and conducting additional stockpile-reduction operations. The obstacles to such activities are largely monetary. Governments or regional authorities would need funds for large infrastructure projects and are daunting by the sheer size of the challenge. Information regarding the size and content of stockpiles in each country is also lacking. Regional destruction centers face additional legal hurdles that prevent weapons from being transported across national borders.

To advance infrastructure improvements, participants recommended undertaking a study to identify how, where and to what extent funds can be sourced through collaborative efforts. They also suggested a study assessing the size and content of stockpiles in order to identify resources, but joint training will also prove to be difficult. The SEESAC maintains a database of national points of contact with responsibility over small-arms policies and programs. To improve coordination in the short term, governments should work with SEESAC to maintain an up-to-date database. In the medium term, it would be helpful to undertake a comprehensive study of what compo-
Looking to the Future

Regional workshops are one aspect of the RASR Initiative, which will develop various coordination mechanisms for governments in the region. The workshops will be held periodically to develop a dialogue among relevant government officials so that they can share information, advice and lessons learned, as well as coordinate efforts when and where appropriate. Another RASR workshop is planned for fall 2009.

For more information and announcements, visit http://www.turningpoint.org

In September 2009, the U.S. Department of State’s Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement hosted a RASR workshop in Washington, D.C. Ressler attended a RASR workshop planned for fall 2009.

Regional Implementation Plan

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