

OPENING SPEECH

At

EUDEM2-SCOT 2003

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON REQUIREMENTS
AND
TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE DETECTION, REMOVAL
AND
NEUTRALIZATION OF LANDMINES AND UXO**

**by Philippe Busquin,
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European Commission

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be amongst you today on the occasion of this Conference.

First of all, allow me to thank the organisers for the efforts they have given to this initiative.

Before beginning your ambitious work, I would like to welcome the scientists as well as the end-users who came from the United States, Europe and all over world and particularly from some mine afflicted countries to take part in this workshop.

Your active participation will surely help in enhancing and promoting communication between deminers, researchers and technology developers, which is the first aim of this event.

As you probably know, the European Commission has been supporting humanitarian mine clearance for more than 10 years. In recent years, the European Union institutions have taken a series of actions to restrict the production and use of anti-personnel landmines, and to support humanitarian mine action.

In July 2001, the Council and the Parliament adopted a regulation to further reinforce the European Union response to the problem of anti-personnel landmines. This regulation lays the foundations for the current integrated and focussed European anti personnel landmine policy. A specific budget line is used to co-finance actions of mine clearance, mine awareness, landmine impact surveys and victim assistance, as well as research and technological development and standardisation actions.

From 1992 to 2002 the European Commission spent more than 200 millions of EURO on mine action. Of this budget, research and development of new technologies for humanitarian demining was supported by about 33 millions of EURO from the Commission through the Framework Programmes in the form of cost shared actions. In the same time the Commission's Joint Research Centre supported these efforts mainly focused on Test & Evaluation of equipment.

Right now, the Commission is preparing an overview of the efforts in research and technological development in support of humanitarian mine clearance, financed throughout Framework Programmes IV and V, and from other budget lines of the Commission (involved Directorates General are Information Society, External Relations, Cooperation Office, Development and Joint Research Centre)..

This overview underlines that significant progress has already been made in a number of areas, as the following examples:

- Developing advanced information management tools for planning and monitoring the progress of mine clearance projects;

- Supporting demining operations by implementing geographical information systems (GIS) linked to the survey of mine infected countries. It includes the provision of managers of mine clearance projects with satellite imagery and derived products at different resolutions (by the way, this task falls also in the objectives of the GMES initiative on global monitoring for environment and security);
- Developing a new generation of mine detectors which significantly improve deminers' ability to locate minimum metal mines, especially when they are buried in difficult mineralised soils;
- Researching and implementing new tools to support the vital task of area reduction. By reducing a large suspected area to the small area that actually contains mines or unexploded ordnance, very significant savings of cost and time can be made on demining operations;.
- Developing international standards for test and evaluation of demining equipment and methods which have already influenced field practice. These standards help to ensure that mine clearance operations are safe, effective and consistent.

Even though research and technological development has had a measurable impact on the overall process of mine clearance, it must be recognised that the delivery of new tools and equipment to improve the search for individual mines has not met early expectations. Reasons for this are complex:

- First, it is necessary to understand the considerable complexity of the mine clearance problem as a process to which risk assessment and management tools need to be applied.
- Then, the initial lack of appreciation by some researchers of how to apply advanced technologies in developing regions.

- Finally, some significant non-technological problems in finding the resources needed to turn prototype into fully tested commercial products ready to use in the field.

However, it becomes obvious, as stated in a study published recently by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, that landmines are not the only dangerous obstacles remaining after conflicts are finished and may not even be the most significant one. So we need to look to all threats, which is actually reflected in the presently open call for proposals of the Commission, issued by the Directorate General for the Information Society, related to the specific programme for integrating and strengthening the European research area.

In fact, this work programme covers research on new concepts and information technologies to enhance civil security in the prevention and the management of industrial and terrorist threats and to improve crisis management. This programme will also include technologies for humanitarian aid and humanitarian demining for which the focus is on methods for the reliable detection of safe areas, and multi-purpose sensors for risks including in particular mine and explosive detection.

A particular attention should also be given to the new initiative of the Commission outside the Framework Programme on security related research. This initiative may also be used to support innovation related to humanitarian mine clearance.

In conclusion:

-the efforts on research and technological development supported by the Commission and by the European Union member States have reached a significant level of maturity.; and

- it is now time to implement these new technologies in demining projects. - it is necessary to establish a joint strategy between the research and technological development actors and the mine action donors in order to secure the effective deployment and use of new technologies which have already been developed. Therefore, it is good to see that the Federal Republic of Germany is launching a research programme aiming at fielding further improved mine detectors, in close collaboration with Belgium, The Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom and the Commission.

Thank you for your attention. I wish you a very successful work.

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