

Canada supports mine clearance in Abkhazia, Georgia

In the early months of 2000, Canada supported mine clearance activities in the territory of Abkhazia in the former Soviet Republic of Georgia, which was left littered with landmines by a secessionist conflict that ended in 1994.

Canada contributed \$215,000 to mine clearance and production of a Level One Socio-economic Impact Survey of mined land in the territory. The work was done by British demining organization HALO Trust which has staff working in several mine affected regions including Afghanistan, Angola and Somalia. In Abkhazia, Canadian funds were used for overhead costs and to purchase vehicles, communications and computer equipment.

The level one survey has provided the Georgian government and international donor countries the clearest picture yet of the mine problem in Abkhazia.

Survey results showed that almost half of mined land in Abkhazia (48 per cent) is of low priority for clearance, as it is not close to human habitation, no accidents have occurred and cleared land is unlikely to be used. About 45 per cent of mined land is of medium priority, as accidents have occurred and cleared land may be, or is likely to be, used. Only seven per cent of mined land is of the highest priority, meaning that accidents have occurred and pressure for the use of the land is very high. This information allows more effective planning for mine action projects in the territory.

HALO Trust has marked the majority of high and medium priority land and is working to clear the highest priority land as quickly as possible. Equipment purchased with Canada's funding will have a lasting impact on HALO Trust's ability to fulfil these tasks. ●

Demining a former football pitch near the Gumista river in Abkhazia. 400 anti-personnel mines were cleared from this field.



Carol Hart/CIDA

Slovenia's International Trust Fund thanks Canada for its contributions

In June 2000, representatives of Slovenia's International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance visited Canada to thank us for our support of the Fund to date.

The Fund's Director, Jernej Cimperse, and Deputy Director, Goran Gacnik met with Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy to discuss the success of the Canada-Slovenia partnership. Cimperse and Gacnik also met with Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade representatives to review programs and discuss future plans.

Slovenia's International Trust Fund was established by the governments of Slovenia and the United States in March 1998 to assist Bosnia and Herzegovina to deal with the long term challenges

of landmine contamination. In 1999, the fund's operation expanded to include Kosovo, Croatia and Albania.

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What makes the Fund unique is that each contribution is matched dollar-for-dollar by the United States, to a total possible ceiling of \$56 million over two years, including matching funds. Donations in the fund's first year, 1998-99, totalled US\$12.2 million. These donations were matched with US

Canada's contribution to Slovenia's Trust Fund has helped fund mine clearance in Bosnia by groups such as Handicap International/Ackija Protiv Mina.

funds for a total of US\$24.4 million.

Since the Fund's creation, Canada has contributed \$2.6 million to it for mine action projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. These funds have supported projects in Bosnia, with contributions to Handicap International/Ackija Protiv Mina, SFOR and Norwegian People's Aid for mine clearance, the Canadian International Demining Centre for mine detection dogs, and victim assistance.

In Kosovo, funds have been contributed to the United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre. We are currently exploring options for further contributions.

Canada's representative on the Board of Advisors of Slovenia's International Trust Fund, W. G. Robinson, Q.C., will serve as Board chair for a one-year term starting in September 2000. ●