

## China's Landmines and Cluster Munitions Policy (China)

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**China's recent Defense White Paper, which has captured the headlines, has outlined the country's emerging policy on landmines, explosive remnants of war and demining.**

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Chapter XIV of the Paper claims China "earnestly fulfilled its obligations under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its Protocols." It says China has "taken concrete measures to ensure that its anti-personnel landmines in service meet the relevant technical requirements of the Amended Protocol on Landmines" and that "China actively participates in the work of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Cluster Munitions."

However, China is a member neither of the landmine nor cluster munitions bans and nothing in the White Paper suggests a move in that direction. It thus implicitly reserves the right to use both of these weapons, which are widely regarded in the international community as indiscriminate, given their disproportionate humanitarian impact on civilians. Indeed, Landmine Monitor estimates that China has the largest landmine stockpile in the world, with around 110 million mines. Nevertheless, China has said on other occasions that it supports "the ultimate goal of a total ban on antipersonnel mines" and in 2007 voted for a UN general assembly resolution calling for universalization of the landmine ban treaty.

The White Paper also says China has "continuously taken an active part in international humanitarian de-mining assistance," holding trainings for "Angola, Mozambique, Chad, Burundi, Guinea-Bissau, and both northern and southern Sudan." It has provided demining equipment to these countries, as well as Egypt and has provided "mine eradication funds" to Peru, Ecuador and Ethiopia. Though not mentioned in the Paper, China also donated equipment to Jordan in 2007 and has contributed demining troops to the UN peacekeeping mission (UNIFIL) in Lebanon. However, Landmine Monitor says China's contribution to mine action in 2007 was only \$789,000, miniscule in comparison with the US demining budget of \$70 million or tiny Norway's \$50 million

It is likely that China's emergence as a mine action donor is linked to its growing role in the international arena, particularly in Africa, which has been driven by its "need for oil and other natural resources." According to the Boston Globe, while this means that China has become "the largest new investor, trader, buyer, and aid donor in a raft of African countries" it also faces accusations of being a "modern colonial colossus intent on stripping Africa of its wealth" and having "buttressed the harsh rule of indigenous authoritarian governments."

This means that mine affected countries and mine action agencies should be cautious about celebrating too loudly China's demining assistance in places like Sudan, where it has been particularly criticized for fueling the conflict in Darfur.

For more analysis of China's Defense White Paper, [click here](#).

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