APPENDIX J

Final Declaration of the International Conference of Experts on Mechanical Mine Clearance, Petersburg/Bonn, Germany, 11/12 December 1996

At the invitation of Dr. Klaus Kinkel, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, an International Conference on Mechanical Mine Clearance took place in Bonn on 11 and 12 December 1996. In his opening speech, Minister Kinkel stressed the need for enhanced mine clearance as a step towards solving the world-wide mine problem. In this context, he also attached great importance to the earliest possible conclusion of a comprehensive and, if possible, universally applicable agreement on a ban on anti-personnel mines. At the same time, he urged that the laying of new mines must be stopped and that further steps on the part of individual countries are required, such as moratoria on the use and export of anti-personnel mines.

At the Conference, the participants agreed upon the following:

1. Vast areas of mined terrain continue to be a major obstacle to lasting recovery in many countries. The international community, including affected countries, must make increased efforts to solve the mine problem in the foreseeable future. To this end, existing technologies should be combined more than before in order to achieve faster and safer mine clearance.

2. Mechanical systems as a part of the toolbox help to accelerate mine clearance wherever their use is feasible. They should be essential elements of mine clearance procedures in combination with others in the clearance of landmines. An integrated concept promises optimum efficiency with regard to clearance speed and meeting the quality standard. Quality control is an essential element in the use of mechanical mine clearance.

   The demands on mechanical mine clearance systems are complex. Such systems therefore must be able to cope with the various tasks. The Conference welcomes the contribution made by private companies towards the development of mechanical mine clearance technologies.

3. Appropriate deployment technologies, as well as management, control and logistical structures, must be established for mechanical mine clearance systems. General deployment and safety standards are required for mechanical mine clearance. Of particular importance is the creation and the development of a central, universally accessible database on machinery of assistance in mine clearance and to the development of a test procedure for the qualification of new mine clearance equipment. The participants request the United Nations to facilitate this.

   The meeting also encourages countries to contribute to the

preparatory work and to make the results available to the United Nations.

4. The participants call upon the United Nations to promote the development and the use of suitable mechanical mine clearance systems to a greater extent. The meeting welcomes the willingness of the Federal Republic of Germany to provide financial support for a United Nations project serving this purpose.

The meeting stressed the need for governments, international organisations and the business community to increase their efforts towards the development and introduction of mechanical mine clearance systems and associated state-of-the-art technology.