

MISSÃO PERMANENTE DE  
MOÇAMBIQUE JUNTO AS NAÇÕES  
UNIDAS E DE OUTRAS  
ORGANIZAÇÕES INTERNACIONAIS  
EM GENEVRA



PERMANT MISSION OF MOZAMBIQUE  
TO UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AND  
OTHER INTERNATIONAL  
ORGANIZATION

IN GENEVA

**Statement by H.E. Ambass. Pedro Comissário, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Mozambique to the United Nations Office in Geneva and other International Organizations at the Thematic Panel**

**“Implementation of Article 5 of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention”**

**Friday, 8 June 2018, 10:00 – 11:00**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

At the outset, we wish to thank the coordinators of the Article 5 Committee for affording us the opportunity to share Mozambique’s modest experience in the management of residual contamination.

We have had the pleasure of doing so, in the past, in different settings, and we are grateful to be able to do it once again.

You will recall that, in early 1990s, Mozambique was one of the most affected countries in the World, by anti-personnel mines contaminating large areas.

This landmine contamination was a consequence of the two wars that ravaged our country, namely the liberation struggle, from 1964 to 1974, and the war of destabilization, from 1975 to 1992.

So, thirty years of mine laying, which ended with a peace agreement in 1992, left the country riddled with mines and explosive remnants of war.

Due to the negative impact of landmines in Mozambique, demining became a key priority for our Government, as a vital element for peace and development.

Therefore, Mozambique was one of the leading advocates for and one of the first states to sign the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Given the severe impact of mines in the country, Mozambique took it on with urgency to address the problem.

Furthermore, Mozambique hosted, in Maputo, the First Meeting of States Parties in 1999 and most recently the third Review Conference, in June 2014.

Excellencies,

Mozambique initiated demining operations shortly after the signing of the Rome Peace Accords in 1992, through a district-by-district process of surveying and identifying all known mined areas.

This was not an easy task for Mozambique and its partners, for the use of mines in the country was not reserved to one part but was truly on a national scale, with large barrier minefields and defensive minefields laid during those wars.

Further to the widespread use of mines, one of the main complications faced by Mozambique was the fact that these areas, in many cases, were small and there was no information concerning the type, quantity or patterns in which they were laid.

As many of you know, in 1995 we created the National Demining Institute (IND) which was to lead the charge in solving this crisis. It became operational in 1999 with the entry into force of the Convention. The IND was entrusted with the tasks of coordinating all mine action activities, proposing policies and strategies on mine related issues to the Government, developing and supervising a

mine action plan; supervising all demining activities, developing and implementing a quality assurance system, maintaining a national database and mobilizing resources for the support of mine action.

Like in other States Parties, the first attempt to underline the problem was a Landmine Impact Survey covering 1,374 areas known or suspected to be mined measuring approximately 562 square kilometres. But, this survey overestimated the amount of the problem, which is a common site in other States Parties.

Over the years, these areas were progressively reduced through a robust land release efforts, in cooperation with our partners including the Norwegian People's Aid, HALO Trust and others.

These efforts were guided by our national standards which were continuously updated, in line with updates to International Mine Action Standards and best practices, with focus on non-technical survey, technical survey, and clearance. Many of our partners are here, and they can speak on the important work they have helped us to undertake.

Despite efforts to complete the programme, within the established deadlines, Mozambique found itself compelled to submit two short requests for extension, before completing operations: one of 5 years and another one of a year. The short request allowed for specific survey and clearance milestones to be developed.

The need to submit extensions request was not due to a lack of effort, but rather given the reality on the ground. We, of course, did not take this situation lightly. Instead, we designed national action plans which would allow Mozambique to meet its legal obligation under the Convention.

More importantly, the 2008-2014 National Mine Action Plan also included a district-by-district process. This required demining operators to complete systematic surveys in the districts where they were working in order to make "every effort to identify mined areas. Throughout this process, the local communities themselves were

the best primary source of information on mine suspected areas in their localities.

A consultation and confirmation process with the operators, IND and local communities, led the government to confirm the results of the districts surveys and declare the districts free of all known mined areas.

In the meantime, it was possible to realize the critical aspect that national standards, community involvement and data collection and management had for the programme. Through these efforts Mozambique sought to identify all areas under its jurisdiction or control, in which antipersonnel mines were known or suspected to be emplaced. The Government has exerted all reasonable effort to address mined areas under its jurisdiction or control, in accordance with its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention.

As previously indicated, the demining work in the country was guided by the National Mine Action Standards for Mozambique, developed from the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). These activities were all subjected to internal and external quality assurance as well as a final quality assurance inspection, as prescribed in the national standards.

Following all these endeavors, the demining process was concluded. In fact, we completed the demining of the last known minefield in 2015, thus, fulfilling our obligations under Article 5 of the Convention.

However, in our Declaration of Article 5 compliance, we also recognized the fact that there might be unknown areas still contaminated with other explosive remnants of war and even landmines. It was impossible to determine an accurate estimate of the location and number of all mines originally planted during the war of destabilization, due to the extended and unconventional nature of the conflict and typically indiscriminate and unrecorded use of the landmines.

Furthermore, the Declaration went on to indicate that in the event that previously unknown mined areas would be discovered, after the Declaration of Completion, Mozambique would:

- Inform all States Parties of such a discovery;
- Ensure the effective exclusion of civilians from the area; and
- Ensure the destruction of all anti-personnel mines as soon as possible.

On top of that, the Completion Declaration addressed the issue of 9 suspected mined areas, which remained submerged under water on account of the major flooding of 2000, diverting the Limpopo River.

Eventually, Mozambique should have made it more clearly, in the Completion Declaration, that there may be very little probability that mines would be detected in those submerged areas.

Many delegates may not be aware of the flooding magnitude and the ensuing tremendous damages. But some may be familiar with the national emergency caused by this flooding by virtue of which, to this day, many of those areas remain submerged.

Meanwhile, since five of these areas became accessible in 2016, we have carried out a technical survey, which resulted in their subsequent cancellation.

Four areas, equivalent to 18.888 square meters, remain inaccessible. We are committed to continuing to include them in our transparency report and keep the States Parties informed on the status quo.

In the meantime, these areas are regularly monitored, for the Government is aware of the danger that they pose.

The IND, together with the local authorities has done coordinated work consisting of the deployment of monitoring teams. As we speak, the monitoring team is on the spot. We hope to report to the States Parties on the outcomes of this monitoring process in due course.

Fairly, we believe that inaccessibility of suspected mined areas, due to natural disasters, may occur in any other State Party. Therefore, we are of the view that the coordinators of the article 5 should be prepared to address such cases.

As we have already indicated, the Completion Declaration anticipated the eventual discover of previously unknown mined areas. Unfortunately, this has materialized, just a couple of years on the Completion Declaration.

There were two accidents in which one boy was injured and another killed, which led Mozambique to undertake an investigation in the concerned area. The investigation led to the identification of previously unknown mined areas in Nangade district, in Cabo Delgado, along the border with Tanzania, sometime after the Completion Declaration.

In line with our commitment to the Convention, we communicated these mined areas to States Parties, through our Article 7 Report. It is true that there was a delay in reporting, which was due the required long time for the investigation and subsequent confirmation of what we were dealing with.

With the support of our partners APOPO, we identified these areas and in cooperation with Norwegian People's Aid we have addressed a total of 127, 522 square meters, out of which 11,218 square meters were cancelled; 86,326 square meters were reduced and 29,979 square meters were cleared. During this work, we have also found and destroyed 107 anti-personnel mines and 1 unexploded ordnance. The task was successfully completed in June 2017.

This unfortunate event, of course, highlights the importance of the process adopted by the Convention at the Twelfth MSP in dealing with such situations as well as the relevance of remaining vigilant and having a residual capacity in place.

While the Government was aware of the possible risk that previously unknown mined areas could be discovered in the future, it was unrealistic and unsustainable for humanitarian demining

operators to remain in the country in a stand-by capacity, to deal with eventual residual task.

Their withdrawal from Mozambique was also aimed to re-allocate these global resources and capacities to other Countries where the problem of mines continues to pose a serious threat to the movement of people and goods.

Aware of its responsibility to manage the residual risk posed by explosive remnants of war, in view of the withdrawal of the country's demining operators, the Government of Mozambique developed a strategy based on the training of police units at national level.

In this context, technical training of national cadres to carry out the tasks of residual nature, the destruction of any explosive devices, when necessary, has been conducted.

Police and Military are being trained and equipped, as we seek to build a sustainable national capacity to manage residual ERW contamination and rapidly respond to the possible discovery of any previously unknown mined areas.

Expected tasks for the Police include the removal and destruction of UXOS and isolated mines, conducting community awareness sessions on the dangers of landmines and other unexploded ordnance, advising them to be careful whenever they would discover an unfamiliar object.

In order to give more consistency to the program, and to avoid gaps, in case of transfer of the trained members from one Police Command to another, the government opted for selecting and training 2 police officers in each District Police Command and an equal number in each Provincial Command.

Thus, part of the trained police officers undertook the destruction of UXOs, in their areas of jurisdiction namely, Mocuba in the Zambezia Province; and Magude and Catuane in Maputo Province, where isolated UXOs were found.

With respect to the emergence of minefields, the Government's strategy is to pass this responsibility on to the Mozambican Armed Forces, since they have specialized demining units in the South, Central and Northern regions that can solve the problem. If the scale of the minefield is beyond the capacity and resources of the Government, we would then advise other States Parties and partners for due assistance.

It is our belief that the residual institutional capacity must not only be ready to address residual contamination, but also to be an interlocutor with the States Parties and the Convention, in particular when it comes to new mined areas.

We express, once again, our continuous unwavering political commitment to the Convention's objectives.

To conclude, Mr. Chairman, we wish to reiterate our thanks to all our partners for all the support provided to Mozambique, over time.

Thank you for your kind attention.











