



THE UNITED NATIONS MINE ACTION

**Standing Committee
on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Mine Action Technologies
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*Intervention on behalf of the UN Mine Action Team
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Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address you on behalf of the UN Mine Action Team.

2007 is a decisive milestone in the implementation of the Nairobi Action Plan, and indeed in the life of the Convention. We are reaching a common understanding on the practical meaning of 'compliance' with the obligation to clear 'all known mined areas'.

The United Nations Mine Action Team has contributed to the progress made in the implementation of the 'clearing mined areas' agenda as identified in the Nairobi Action Plan.

Action # 17: Intensify and accelerate efforts to ensure the most effective and most expeditious possible fulfillment of Article 5

The Completion Initiative aims to accelerate assistance to States Parties with a relatively modest anti-personnel mine problem to develop a national strategy to implement their Article 5 obligation within the deadline set by the Convention. While we are at different stages of implementation of this Initiative in a number of countries (among them Albania, Malawi and Zambia), our experience to date illustrates that in order for the Completion Initiative to be successful, there are two essential requirements:

- *Plans for completion need to be developed on the basis of a clear picture of the mine and ERW problem in a given country.*
- *National ownership for the Completion Plan and a strong partnerships between all mine action stakeholders—States Parties, donors, implementing partners and UNDP—are pre-requisites for success.*

The United Nations stresses that, although it has an important role in encouraging and supporting governments, ultimately, it is up to affected countries to request assistance and come forward with the approach and the commitments that they wish to promote.

Action # 18: Urgently identify all areas

Since the last meeting of States Parties, the United Nations Mine Action Team contributed to the increased knowledge and understanding of the size and more importantly, the impact of the anti-personnel mine problem.

There are on-going survey activities in several countries, including Guinea-Bissau and Sudan. In other countries, survey activities have recently been finalized, or are in the process of being finalized. A few examples of this include: UNDP support to Mauritania, in collaboration with the Survey Action Centre, for the conduct of an impact survey. In Senegal, an impact assessment was conducted with support from Handicap International and UNDP, and quality assurance oversight provided by UNMAS. The assessment, reflected in the recently published report, focused on Casamance and determined that 52 of 83 localities are high- or medium-impact. In Angola, a National Landmine Impact Survey (LIS) was completed in 15 provinces in 2006; the remaining three provinces will be finalized in 2007, providing baseline for the programme.

Action # 19: Urgently develop and implement national plans

The United Nations continues to provide mine action support to more than 35 countries, primarily through partnerships with governments, mine action operators, as well as international and non-governmental organizations. As part of our programmes, we assist States Parties to develop national mine action plans and strategies. To date, such plans have been developed in a number of countries. These include, but are not limited to: Afghanistan, Mozambique, Uganda, Tajikistan, Yemen. In addition, a number of countries, including Mauritania, Guinea-Bissau and Senegal, are planning to develop or update their mine action strategy.

Action #21 Ensuring that mine risk education programmes are made available in all communities at risk.

The United Nations supports a range of mine risk education projects covering community liaison, public information, education and training and coordination activities, with new projects being developed in Nepal and intensified in Lebanon. While our collective aim in supporting risk education relates to effectively reducing risk and enabling communities to live in affected areas until clearance has been undertaken, more efforts need to be made in ensuring the integration of risk education in school curricula, through community-based programmes, increasing efforts to mark or fence dangerous areas, and effectively integrating these activities across all mine action activities. Recent (and very welcome) statistics from Cambodia indicate a significant decline in casualties and, while this is not entirely attributable to mine action, certainly the decline corresponds with the development of relatively innovative community based programmes and more localised approaches to clearance, risk education and community liaison.

In the area of international partnerships UNICEF has been working with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) to undertake a study on the scope and effectiveness of hazardous area marking and fencing projects and has more recently embarked with GICHD on a study on approaches to community liaison. With the US based Center for Disease Control and Prevention UNICEF continued its joint project to apply public health methodology in the fight against landmines. In late 2006, a training course was provided for South and South East Asia on Field Epidemiology for Mine Action. At the same time, UNICEF and CDC have finalised tools for the collection,

storage analysis and reporting of mine and ERW casualties, with the aim of adding value to existing information systems.

Action #22: Make their problem, plans, progress and priorities for assistance known

The United Nations provided assistance to States Parties at the country-level to prepare their transparency reports as per Article 7 of the Convention, and close to 100% have already provided their report, ahead of the 30 April 2007 deadline. In addition, UNDP prepared an internal guide to Article 7 reports targeting UNDP staff members who provide assistance to governments in fulfilling their Article 7 report. The UNDP guide has been distributed again to both States Parties and States not party to the Convention (who may be considering submitting a voluntary report) at the recent treaty workshop organized by the UN Mine Action Team and the Implementation Support Unit in the margins of the 10th Programme Directors and UN Advisors meeting.

Action #24 Ensure and increase the effectiveness and efficiency of their efforts

The United Nations strongly believes that the inclusion of a gender perspective in all aspects of our work will ensure increased effectiveness of policies and programmes. A UN-wide plan for integrating gender considerations has been developed and is being monitored by an inter-agency working group. In addition, ensuring a more systematic and predictable approach to gender equality is a priority for UNDP in 2007. Indeed, UNDP adopted at the end of 2006 the eight-point agenda for gender mainstreaming and crisis prevention and recovery. This document identifies the specific areas in which UNDP can advance the gender equality agenda, in situations of conflict or natural disasters. UNDP also established a Gender Window within the Thematic Trust Fund for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (CPR TTF). The CPR TTF is already well known within the mine action donor community as many contributions to UNDP activities are channelled through this trust fund. This new mechanism will allow us to better monitor and report back on financial contributions that focus on gender considerations.

Within the mine action sector, gender mainstreaming is particularly important to ensure that the different needs of males and females are included in the planning and prioritization process. In support of these efforts, a regional gender workshop was organized in September 2006 in Dubai by the United Nations Mine Action Team and included the participation of six countries. During the meeting, each programme developed a gender action plan. The representatives from Afghanistan and Jordan provided updates on the status of implementation of these Gender Action Plans at the March 2007 meeting of Programme Directors and UN Advisors. Indeed, the UN Mine Action Centre in Afghanistan (MACA) not only analyses sex-disaggregated data to inform its programme but also instituted a human resources policy that encourages female applicants and helps ensure a female-friendly work environment, and is providing gender equality training to staff. On the other hand, the programme in Jordan incorporated gender considerations in their MRE, victim assistance and survey initiatives and engages mixed survey teams to gather data from men and women in affected communities.

In addition, UNDP country offices recently completed a survey on the status of implementation of the Organization's strategic plan. The analysis of the responses shows that most of the mine action programmes have initiated processes to ensure that mine action activities are gender-sensitive. Indeed, some countries, like Uganda and Mozambique, have now mainstreamed gender considerations in their national mine action policy and strategy. Other mine action programmes, such as Tajikistan and Azerbaijan, reported that they have ensured that mine action activities take into consideration as well as benefit both men and women. Still other UNDP offices reported on particular activities that are being undertaken to advance gender equality in national mine action

programmes. For example, Sri Lanka mentioned that their recruitment policy is non discriminatory, and that training on gender issues is provided to the mine action staff. Laos stated that a gender analysis on the impact from mines and ERW was initiated. In sum, gender considerations are increasingly treated as an integrated component of mine action programmes, but more work remains to be done.

Action #25: Strengthen efforts to enable mine-affected States Parties to participate in the fullest possible exchange of equipment, material and scientific and technological information

Last month, the 10th International Meeting of National Mine Action Directors and UN Advisors, was organized with support from the GICHD. This meeting brought together national and international mine action practitioners and stakeholders. In addition to the subjects already mentioned, the agenda focused on the different models of UN assistance to mine-affected countries, capacity building, transition to full national ownership, and sustainability. It was suggested that the 11th meeting could be held in an affected country.

UNDP facilitates the national mine action staff exchange programme (MAX). In 2006, some 30 nationals visited peer programmes. In partnership with Cranfield University and James Madison University, we also organize senior management and middle management courses. Most recent courses were held between May and November 2006 in the United States, and Jordan. The aim of these programmes is to assist national mine action programmes to learn from each other and to be kept apprised of the most recent developments in the field of mine action. The GICHD conducted an evaluation of these training courses in January 2006 and we are in the process of discussing its results with both of our implementing partners. On the basis of these discussions and of the programmes needs as identified at country-level, we hope to reformulate and adapt the existing courses and start providing 'new and improved' courses during the second half of 2007.

Action #26: Share information on – and further develop and advance – mine clearance techniques, technologies and procedures

There are a number of approaches that have been pioneered by mine action operators. The sector could benefit from a standardization of terminology and decision-making through the development of risk management policy guidelines, while making appropriate revisions to the International Mine Action Standards in order to introduce a greater focus on alternative land release methods. UNMAS has committed to lead the efforts to develop these within the next year.

Action # 40-50: Cooperation and assistance (Mine Action and Development)

The United Nations Mine Action Team substantially emphasizes mainstreaming mine action into broader development plans, budgets and programmes, both at a global level and at a country level. In fact, this is a core part of the inter-agency mine action strategy for 2006-2010. From our perspective, there are two main reasons for mainstreaming mine action into development planning and budgeting: 1) it helps ensure that mine action priorities are set in line with development and reconstruction needs and priorities, therefore reinforcing the impact of mine action; 2) the allocation of resources from the national budget provides a framework that enables multi-sector planning, thereby reinforcing the efficiency of mine action interventions.

Our efforts in this regard have yielded important results. More countries have integrated mine action into national development plans or strategies and more countries are also mobilizing national resources to finance demining activities. These countries include, but are not limited to: Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia Herzegovina, Cambodia, Croatia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Sudan. At the same time, additional national resources need to be committed to mine risk education.

At the global policy level, UNDP is leading work with the UK within the OECD-DAC on the development of guidelines for donors for the integration of mine action into development programming. Canada is an important partner in this regard, and so is the GICHD. These guidelines will be developed and field-tested throughout 2007.

Finally, the United Nations provides resources to support mine action programmes through its core funds or Trust Funds. For example, in the case of Sudan, UNMAS, UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, and UNHCR (some with implementing support from UNOPS) are part of the UN Mine Action Office. The United Nations financial assistance to the mine action programme in 2006 amounted to a total of US\$55,571,743. This level of support is notable but even more impressive is the wide array of sources of income that the UN system has accessed in its effort to obtain funds for the Sudan programme. We have received contributions from Canada, the European Union, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, and the United States. A large portion of 2006 income - some 28.5m USD - derived from the assessed contributions of Member States to the UN peacekeeping mission in Sudan. And some 1.8m was made available from the Common Humanitarian Fund for Sudan, a brand new funding vehicle intended to improve the UN's coordination of humanitarian response initiatives. A grant of nearly 2m was also provided by the UN Human Security Trust Fund to support a ground-breaking victim assistance initiative in north and south Sudan. In 2007, the total of all the pledged and received contributions is already US\$52,202,390, of which US\$39,091,680 is from the assessed contribution of Member States to the peacekeeping mission, and US\$13,110,710 is from other donor contributions. Finally, we work in partnership with a number of international and non-governmental bilaterally funded partners, thus the donor base for the mine action in Sudan may be even broader than what I have outlined

Conclusion

Let me conclude by congratulating States Parties for the dynamism and innovative spirit that they have demonstrated, and continue to demonstrate, in the implementation of this Convention. It is thanks to your unprecedented example that the international community has the courage to dare to dream that it is possible to address collectively, and ultimately prohibit, cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians.