

Statement
By the Delegation of Thailand
on Mine Clearance and Mine Risk Education
at the Meeting of the Standing Committees
of the Mine Ban Convention
23-27 April 2007, Geneva, Switzerland

Co-Chairs,
Distinguished Delegates
Friends and Colleagues,

My delegation wishes, first of all, to express our sincere appreciation to Chile and Norway, the Co-Chairs of the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Mine Action Technologies. I am confident that, with your able guidance, you will lead us towards advancing the implementation of Article 5 of the Mine Ban Convention as well as the success of this meeting.

We are here to review once again developments, progress, and challenges in the area of mine clearance and mine risk education. In this regard, Thailand wishes to reiterate our firm determination to eradicate all anti-personnel mines within our territory. We are also committed to mine risk awareness-raising activities among villagers in the vicinity of hazardous areas, as well as the general public and the civil society.

Co-Chairs,

In the past year, there have been some key developments on mine clearance, which Thailand would like to share at this meeting.

In 2006, a total area of 11,138,604 square meters was cleared as a result of collaborative efforts by personnel from the four humanitarian demining units, and the General Chatchai Choonhavan Foundation, a local NGO. This brings the total area of cleared mine fields in Thailand between 2000-2006 up to 20,287,643 square meters. As you can see from these statistics, mine clearance in Thailand has gained renewed momentum. Mine-free land in 2006 has increased more than 10-fold, compared to 2,298,457 square meters in 2004 and 718,910 square meters in 2003. This positive development is the result of the increased competency and expertise of the deminers, as well as modern technologies and equipment.

In clearing landmines, the Thailand Mine Action Center (TMAC) has adopted a practical strategy where the most heavily mine-affected and socio-economically challenged areas are cleared as a matter of priority.



ผู้แทนไทย

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Therefore, TMAC's work has mainly been concentrated on the Thai-Cambodian border, the most heavily mine-affected area in Thailand.

It is also worth noting that in 2006, a total of 15,510,993 square meters of cleared mine areas were returned to the communities. These areas are currently being developed for various purposes in accordance with local interests, such as agriculture, transport and tourism.

Despite all these efforts, a great deal remains to be done. Thailand realizes that we have significant challenges ahead in fulfilling our commitment under Article 5 of the Convention. Our most prominent effort to speed up the de-mining process is the adoption of the Area Reduction Program. The implementation of this plan could potentially reduce mine-contaminated areas to approximately 500 square kilometers or less within a year, with a budget of 4,000,000 U.S. dollars.³ The TMAC is in the process of proposing a detailed work plan and budget for the Cabinet's approval.

The result of the Area Reduction Program would be a significant achievement for Thailand's mine action in the following ways:

1. It would clear specific, identified mine-fields in mine affected areas;
2. It would reduce costs associated with de-mining;
3. It would increase the square meters of safe areas for public usage;
4. It would reduce the number of landmine victims in the future;
5. Surveyed information can be used for making effective mine clearance plans and extension request under Article 5.

Thailand is also pursuing the restructuring of the Thailand Mine Action Centre (TMAC) so that it can better respond to the challenges ahead. The plan to restructure TMAC has already been formally approved by the Humanitarian Mine Action Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, on 26 February 2007. TMAC and other relevant agencies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, are currently working closely to establish the appropriate mechanism and plan, which will be submitted to the National Committee on Humanitarian Mine Action for consideration at the earliest opportunity. We expect that, under the restructured TMAC, our national capacity and efficiency in de-mining will be enhanced and Thailand would be able to meet the Convention's obligations.

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Thailand would like to affirm once again our unwavering determination and commitment towards meeting our mine clearance deadline on 1 May 2009. Recently, we have made considerable progress at both policy

and practical levels in this regard. However, as we all know, mine clearance is both time-consuming and also places great demands on national resources, both financial and personnel. As a developing country with many pressing concerns and needs, our limited resources have become greatly stretched, which often impedes on the pace of Thailand's mine clearance activities. We believe that this is an unfortunate reality, not only for Thailand, but also for many other developing countries with mine clearance obligations.

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With our deadline approaching in May 2009, it is therefore incumbent on us to take stock and evaluate our national mine clearance situation. Indeed, we have been doing so. It appears that despite our very best efforts, an extension request for mine clearance may be inevitable. Thailand, therefore, seeks the understanding of other States Parties on this matter. Having said this, let me assure you that this extension request will by no means set back our commitment and efforts to clear mines within our territory as soon as is realistically possible.

In closing, I wish to emphasize that mine clearance is a delicate, time-consuming, and costly process. The efficacy of this task depends on the support of all domestic stakeholders as well as continued assistance from the international community. I wish to stress once again that we, States Parties, do not only have a duty to promote the universalization of the Mine Ban Convention. We also have a more challenging task of promoting its full and effective on-the-ground implementation. With the mine clearance deadline for the first group of States approaching, certain common implementation challenges may become more evident. In the spirit of cooperation and partnership that very much characterize the Mine Ban Convention, it may be timely to review and discuss these implementation challenges together in a formal setting, such as at the second Review Conference, in order that some common solutions may be found. We believe that this will assist States in meeting their mine clearance deadlines in the future and will lead to better implementation of the Convention as a whole. Thailand looks forward to engaging constructively with all interested parties on this matter.

Thank you.
