

Presented by Chameso Mhetea, Counsellor
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ZIMBABWE'S STATEMENT AT THE MEETING OF THE STANDING
COMMITTEES ESTABLISHED BY STATE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION
ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE USE, STOCKPILING, PRODUCTION AND
TRANSFER OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES AND THEIR DESTRUCTION :
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND : 23-27 APRIL 2007

Madam Co-Chair and Mr Co-Chair, thank you for giving me the floor.
~~Mr Chairman (woman)~~
Esteemed members of the Donor Community
Invited Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I should like to commence by thanking the organisers of this important meeting, ~~and our host, the Swiss Government.~~ Let me state from the outset the determination of my government to fulfil its obligations under Article 5 while I will update you on our demining activities.

At independence in 1980, we inherited over 750kms of mined territory in 6 districts along our border with Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia. Various explosive remnants of war remain scattered across the entire country, ~~consequent upon our protracted war of liberation.~~ These mines and other remnants of war continue to kill and maim innocent people and fauna (both wild and domesticated).

Commencing in 1980, we started to clear isolated border minefields targeting those arrears earmarked for infrastructural development viz for : access to water, rural electrification and the construction of accommodation facilities. As is evident, these efforts were piecemeal in nature. Demining started in earnest in 1998 when the US Government funded the training of military personnel and the demining of the 220km Victoria Falls-Mlibizi minefield; the US support had cleared only 50km of the 220km minefield when it was terminated. The Zimbabwe Government took over the funding until the completion of the effort in 2005, some 7 years following the beginning of the demining. Unfortunately, funding from the European Union for the commercial demining of the 335km Musengezi-Rwenya minefield which had began in parallel to the US Government gesture, also dried up in year 2000 when only 130km of the 335km minefield had been cleared.

To date, about 40% of mined arrears have been cleared. Humanitarian military demining is in progress on the 70km double stretch of the Sango Border Post - Crooks Corner minefield in the south-eastern lowveld of the country. At the current level of Zimbabwe Government funding, we estimate that it will take us more than 20 years to clear all the mined areas. It is this reality which compels us to request for the extension of the 2009 deadline.

Initially, we had intended to clear two minefields in tandem with the military complementing the efforts of the commercial demining companies. However, given the limited funding from our government, this is not possible without

donor support. ^{Let me} A detailed outline of our national plan is available to interested parties; ~~below we~~ give you a limited outline of our challenge :

Phase 1 : Victoria Falls to Mlibizi 220km (183.3km²) – completed. The US Government funded clearance up to 50km and the Zimbabwean Government funded the remainder;

Phase II : Clear the 70km double stretch Gonarezhou National Park (116.7km²). So far 4km² have been cleared and it is estimated that we will take up to 2020. The current level of Government funding is USD500 000 per year.

Phase III : Clear the 205km Rwenya-Musengezi (170km²) minefield – at current funding level it will take more than double the Phase II time which means up to 2022.

Phase IV : Clear the 50km Sheba Forest to Beacon Hill (41.7km²) up to 2026.

Phase V : Clear the 78km minefields in Manicaland Province (65km²) in 2031.

In concluding my remarks, I should like to highlight important characteristics of our national circumstance in this regard. As a country, we have the adequate technical capacity as regards human resources and the technical management skills both within the ranks of the military and civilian demining companies. The major challenge is appropriate funding to purchase the demining technical equipment and to cover the costs of the demining programmes.

UNDP and the
We fervently hope that the donor community will consider favourably our request for adequate funding and thereby help the people of Zimbabwe put a stop to the humanitarian crisis caused by landmines. The country remains unable to utilise all of its land for development purposes, 27 years since independence, because of landmines. We do not wish to see a single more person get killed by landmines nor any animal in the game-parks get killed and maimed. Please help us in our demining effort and we remain ready and willing to attend any dedicated donor demining conference for this purpose. ^{Let us} We wish to thank the ^{committee} International Campaign To Ban Landmines for all their efforts.

1 Thank you

Geneva Centre for International Humanitarian Demining (GCHD)
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