



Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer
of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

INTERSESSIONAL PROGRAMME 2003-2004

STANDING COMMITTEE ON MINE CLEARANCE, MINE RISK EDUCATION AND MINE ACTION TECHNOLOGIES

Meeting Report 11 February 2004

I. Introduction

Pursuant to the decisions of the Fifth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention (5MSP) the meeting of the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Mine Action Technologies was convened by its Co-Chairs, Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi of Japan and Ambassador Sam Sotha of Cambodia, with support of their Co-Rapporteurs Minister Anneli Lindahl Kenny of Sweden and Counsellor Nassima Baghli of Algeria. The meeting was held in Geneva with support of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD).

Co-Chair Ambassador Sam Sotha called the meeting to order welcomed the distinguished delegates from States Parties and States not parties and stressed the topics of the meeting:

- To provide a general overview of the status of the implementation;
- To provide an opportunity for mine-affected States Parties to provide updates on problems they face, and plans, progress and priorities for assistance pertaining to their Article 5 obligations;
- To provide opportunities for updates from those in a position to provide assistance;
- To receive an update from the United Nations system on UN mine action activities; and,
- To receive updates of ongoing work in mine action technologies.

II. Overview of Status of Implementation

Co-Chair Ambassador Inoguchi stressed that the purpose of the Committee is to serve as an informal mechanism to assist in the implementation of Article 5 of the Convention, particularly the responsibilities to identify mined areas, monitor and protect such areas and as soon as possible, and not later than ten years clear the mines. She referred to a detailed background document, which was distributed to the meeting and which contained a compilation of the information already provided by the States Parties on their problems, plans, progress and priorities for assistance.¹ Approximately 20 mine affected states out of the 52 states that have reported mined areas have already developed plans and communicated those with the other States Parties. The Co-Chair highlighted some interesting positive developments but also noted that approximately 30 countries had yet not shared information on their plans to implement Article 5.

Mr Bill Howell of Handicap International, on behalf of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), provided a possible conceptual base for consideration of the future of mine action in the context of the upcoming Review Conference, suggesting that the Standing Committee consider three related concepts: “exit / achievement”, “mine impact free / mine free”, and “impact / control”. He expressed caution at talk of “exit strategies” and proposed that it would be more productive to talk in terms of “achievement strategies”. He also expressed the view that since much useful experience already has been gained, mine action should be more cost efficient and productive mine in the future. He reaffirmed the importance of the provisions of Article 5, noting that “mine-free” must remain the ultimate goal. He highlighted problems associated with substituting “impact free” for “mine-free”, but

¹ This background document was prepared by the Implementation Support Unit of the GICHD to assist the work of the Standing Committee and it can be found on the Internet at:
http://www.gichd.ch/pdf/mbc/SC_feb04/speeches_mc/SCMC_Progress_in_Art_5_11Feb04.pdf.

noted that in the context of achievement strategies there should be defined intermediate goals. Finally, he expressed that the notion of control may be more important than impact measures in determining intermediate objectives.

III. National updates on the status of implementation

The following States Parties provided updates on their problems, plans, progress and priorities for assistance with respect to fulfilling their obligations relating to Article 5:

In **Afghanistan** the impact of mine contamination is high and affects several areas of rehabilitation and development. Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan (MAPA) is the main body for mine action activities in this country. MAPA main activities consist of mine clearance and mine risk education.

Turkey unilaterally started a comprehensive mine clearance activity in 1998. Mine clearance operations are on going without interruption. Turkey provided courses on mine clearance to personnel of the foreign armed forces in the context of “Partnership for Peace” and bilateral agreements.

In 2002, **Albania** put in place a three year mine clearance programme. Mine clearance operations started in 2000. In 2005 most of the programmes related to mine clearance, victim assistance and mine risk education will be achieved.

Tajikistan received practical assistance from a number of countries and international organizations following its call for assistance. Tajikistan in cooperation with GICHD and UNDP shall hold in Dushanbe a Regional Conference on the implementation of the Convention with the participation of representatives of Central Asian States, Afghanistan, China and representatives of donor countries.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is facing difficulties in assessing the exact number of land mines because of unreliable records on their location.

Solomon Islands does not have mined areas but does have some UXO-contaminated areas. Bomb clearance work began in 1980s. This country is facing some problems in the destruction of those devices and is asking for international assistance.

The **Republic of the Congo** indicated that mined areas are located at the cross roads between Congo, Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and suggested that the governments of those three countries undertake mine clearance in a coordinated manner by putting into place a common programme and a unified treatment of this issue. It called for assistance for the elaboration of a mine clearance programme and for technical assistance. It has no mine risk education programmes because of a lack of qualified staff and hence called for assistance in this area.

Guinea Bissau is undertaking mine clearance. Between 1998 and April 2002, 290 mine / UXO victims were registered: 77 dead and 213 injured.

Jordan has a strategic plan is to be a mine-free country by 2009. This plan consists of 3 phases: Phase 1: up to 2005 (Jordan Valley); Phase 2: 2005-2008 (Security zone); Phase 3: 2009 (Israeli-minefields).

Suriname is in the process of preparing a programme for clearance of the mined area and mine risk education.

Zimbabwe has border areas which are the most affected. Plans to demine those areas have been made but their implementation has been hampered by a lack of financial resources. The Zimbabwe Mine Action Centre was established to manage and coordinate all mine action activities. Since the launch of the National Demining Programme, over 220,000 mines have been destroyed but a lot more has to be done. Zimbabwe will not be able to meet its deadline if no significant assistance is received.

In **Malawi**, UNMAS has just completed an initial assessment and the report will be released soon. This country is making an appeal to the international community to help implement a mine action strategy.

Niger has drafted an anti-mines plan for the period 2004-2006. This country is in need of technical and financial assistance for the implementation of this plan.

Regarding **Sudan**, a meeting was held in Nairobi on 12 January 2004 where an agreement was reached between the Sudanese government and SPLM setting mine action as one of the priorities of the peace process. A National Mine Action Authority has been created.

In **Rwanda**, as a response to the landmine / UXO problem and with the assistance of the USA, the Rwandan National Demining Office was established. The cleared areas represented only 46 percent of the suspected minefields. Rwanda is calling for international assistance to meet its obligations.

Mauritania put in place in 2000 a National Commission tasked with implementing the Ottawa Convention. A mine clearance plan of action was also established. A certain number of areas were cleared, 120 minesweepers were trained and mine risk education products were distributed to the population.

Peru indicated that two provinces along the border with Ecuador were cleared and in some specific instances mine clearance was done in collaboration between the countries. Peru is asking for assistance for mine clearance in the region of the Amazon. As to mines laid around power towers, 60 percent of them were cleared, funded 90 percent by Peru itself. Regarding mine risk education, Peru briefed on its programmes in the Central Highlands and noted that it is working with ICRC in preparing written and audio-visual material.

In addition, updates were provided by **Yemen, Thailand, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Cambodia, Mozambique, Ecuador, Guatemala, Uganda** and **Namibia**. Copies of most national updates provided to the Standing Committee can be found on the Internet at: www.gichd.ch/mbc/iwp/SC_feb04/speeches_mc.htm.

IV. Updates on assistance and cooperation

Co-Chair Ambassador Sam Sotha stressed that while there is a need for an emphasis on hearing from mine-affected States Parties with respect to their Article 5 responsibilities it is also important that information is forthcoming with respect to Article 6. It was noted that this Article outlines both the right to seek and receive assistance and the responsibility for each State Party in a position do so to provide assistance for clearance and related activities. In the context of discussions on assistance and cooperation, the following provided updates or views:

Japan made a number of contributions and announced that it will contribute approximately US\$ 410,000 to the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action in fiscal year 2003.

In 2003, **Germany** spent €18.7 million for 53 projects in 14 mine-affected countries covering mine clearance, mine risk education and victim assistance. Further to a decision of the G8 member states, Germany focused on Africa, specially Angola. Other beneficiary countries include Afghanistan, Iraq, Albania and Cambodia. In 2004, Germany is planning to spend €16 million for mine action.

In 2003 **France** trained officers and experts from many countries in its specialized centre in Angers. In the post-conflict mine clearance centre located in Benin, 80 persons from 15 African countries were trained to the techniques of mine clearance.

Spain assisted financially the Organization of American States with mine action in Central America. Spain contributes to the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action. Spanish demining

teams are currently in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Afghanistan and Iraq. The Spanish international centre for demining is undertaking many activities and organising courses.

Kenya is actively participating in international demining. The UN requested that Kenya provide military engineers for demining duties along the Eritrea-Ethiopia border. In order to enhance its capacity to provide these services, Kenya is asking for assistance in training and equipment.

Italy reported that its commitment to mine action remains as strong as ever and that in 2003 the Italian Armed Forces, engaged in peacekeeping missions abroad, destroyed 155 anti-personnel mines, 30 anti-vehicle mines in Bosnia, 3,410 anti-personnel mines and 69 anti-vehicle mines in Afghanistan and several explosive remnants of war in Iraq.

V. Update from the United Nations

Mr. Sayed Aqa of the UNDP, on behalf of the **UN system**, provided an update on the application of the revised UN Mine Action Strategy 2001-2005 describing the activities of three core UN mine action agencies: UNMAS, UNDP and UNICEF. He illustrated goals of the strategy with examples from these agencies in different countries. The UN is currently engaged in 37 countries and its ultimate aim is to assist national authorities of mine affected countries to manage all aspects of mine action on their own while ensuring that: community needs are addressed; mine action is integrated, prioritized and well co-ordinated; and, mine action is conducted in support of development needs and promotes confidence and peace building measures.

In addition Mr. Martin Barber, Director of the **UNMAS**, offered the assistance of UNMAS to mine-affected States Parties in the form of providing to them a suggested format for preparing mine action plans. Both the Co-Chairs and the ICBL welcomed the offer. Co-Chair Ambassador Sam Sotha suggested that the format must be first submitted to the Co-Chairs before releasing it.

VI. Update on Mine Action Technologies

Professor Marc Acheroy of **Belgium** gave an update of an informal meeting of mine action technology experts which had been held the previous day. The group had discussed the need for a roadmap to urgently bring appropriate mine action technologies into operational use, with such a roadmap establishing a list of prioritized operational needs, a portfolio of priority technological projects, and technology action plans, facilitating procurement and identifying means to secure maximum support from donors, end-users and technologists. The importance of making use of existing institutions (e.g., GICHD, ITEP, JMU Mine Action Information Centre) was stressed. He concluded his presentation by pointing out that much work remained to be done by the informal experts group in June and also stressed that the group is open for participation by interested experts.

Dr. Udi Weimar of **Germany** described the mine action potential of using a vapour detection system – or “electronic dog noses” – for detecting explosives. The technology is promising but further work is required before it could be put into operational use. He outlined some of the difficulties connected with using this technology, including sensitivity (to detect very low concentrations), stability (to repeatedly get the same results) and selectivity (to get the right results even when other nitrogen compounds are around).

Mr Kaj Hörberg from the **Sweden’s** EOD and Demining Centre (SWEDEC) presented work carried out by his organisation in collaboration with GICHD and the Croatian Mine Action Centre (CROMAC) within the framework of the European Committee for Standardization (CEN). The aim is to establish a simplified standard (CEN workshop agreement) for testing and evaluation of mechanical demining and mine clearance equipment. The work will provide an opportunity to compare the performance of different demining machines without having to go through the elaborate procedure of establishing full standards. The workshop agreement involves performance and survivability testing and testing of suitability in different environments. The ambition is to have a workshop agreement

before June meeting of the Standing Committee. It will subsequently be presented for possible inclusion in IMAS (International Mine Action Standards).

VII. Co-Chairs' Conclusions

After the update on assistance and cooperation from the donors, the United Nations and Mine Action Technologies, Co-Chair Ambassador Sam Sotha turned over the floor to Co-Chair Ambassador Inoguchi to conclude the meeting. Ambassador Inoguchi expressed her satisfaction that a total of 26 States Parties had provided information during the course of the day on the implementation of Article 5. She closed the meeting with three challenges in advance of the June meeting:

- That the mine affected countries submit their Article 7 reports as soon as possible;
- That the donor community highlight in June how they will renew their commitment in advance of the Review Conference;
- That those approximately 25 mine affected States Parties, which did not speak at the meeting to come prepared in June to share their problems, plans, progress and priorities for assistance.