

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE GENERAL STATUS AND OPERATION OF THE
CONVENTION
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND, 9 FEBRUARY 2004**

Speaking Notes for Martin Barber, Director, United Nations Mine Action Service

I am very pleased to address the Standing Committee on the General Status and Operation of the Convention. As always, all UN interventions this week are made on behalf of the entire UN family.

I would like to share an update on progress made in the implementation of the UN 5 year mine action strategy, and the revisions made to it during a recent mid-term review.

During the 2nd quarter of 2003 the UN conducted a wide-ranging, transparent review of its 5 year strategy – consulting with the 13 UN partner agencies and departments involved in mine action, mine-affected and donor countries, international organizations and NGOs including the ICRC, the GICHD and ICBL. In July 2003 the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action (IACG-MA) approved the revised strategy, which was subsequently noted with appreciation by the General Assembly in December of 2003. While the structure and fundamental elements of the goals embodied in the original Strategy have proven useful and were not significantly modified, notable revisions were made to the objectives to reflect new or emerging priorities, to make our timetables and deadlines more realistic, and to tighten up vague language so that we can ensure measurable progress over the next two years.

Information

In the revised strategy, we have re-emphasized the need for additional information about the extent of the mine problem, focusing on the improvement or the better use of existing tools. In 2003, we developed a tool to help the international community obtain more information on stockpile destruction (with the assistance of Canada), which can be accessed through the E-MINE website (www.mineaction.org).

We are asking all UN-supported programmes to start reporting on a quarterly basis, using the IMSMA reporting tool functionality. We believe that this will start to provide the sort of consistent and comparable data about mine-affected states and their programmes that we have all been seeking.

The UN has also produced a number of CD compilations of information on current issues and processes and aims to continuously up-date these and make them widely available – CD compilations of documents relevant to the AP Mine Ban Treaty are available outside.

Coordination of UN-managed programmes

Coordination is essential to the efficient use of resources and the UN is committed to continuous dialogue with key partners to ensure operational coordination on the ground.

Our goal now reflects the need for effective management and coordination of United Nations operations as a whole, rather than simply rapid response.

In the immediate post-conflict period of 2003 in Iraq, the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action (IACG-MA) activated the UN Mine Action Rapid Response Plan (RRP) to allow UN humanitarian agencies to provide humanitarian relief to vulnerable populations. The RRP may be activated again in the coming months in Sudan. A study on the lessons learned from the experience in Iraq is being conducted.

Increased focus on coordination leads to a better use of existing resources. In Ethiopia/Eritrea, military deminers from the UN peacekeeping force were trained to demine in accordance with the International Mine Action Standards and are assisting to clear the Temporary Security Zone. In Sudan, mine action brought together state and non-state actors for the first time and was a catalyst for the peace process and peacebuilding activities within the country.

In November 2003, the Security Council, under the Presidency of Angola, held an Open Briefing on mine action and peacekeeping operations at which the Under-Secretary-General for peacekeeping operations and the Director of the GICHD spoke. The Council then issued an important Presidential Statement (copies available outside). The Statement commits the Council, among other things, to systematically consider the requirements for mine action when drafting mandates for peacekeeping operations.

The revised Strategy commits the UN to take gender into account in all its mine action programming and UNMAS is coordinating an inter-agency project to produce guidelines on gender and mine action. Women, men, girls and boys are exposed to and affected by mines and ERW in different ways. I urge you to let us know of programmes that have sought to account for gender in any way, and we hope that the guidelines will ultimately inform both UN, national and NGO planning and programme implementation.

Assistance to national and local mine action programmes

The UN assists national mine action authorities in over 35 countries and regions. The revised strategy very clearly recognizes that mine action must be reflected in national development programming and budgeting processes and UNDP is taking the lead to help national authorities realize this objective at the country level. The UN partners are also working hard to urge donor countries to commit development funds to mine action, in recognition of the fact that development projects will inevitably falter if mine action needs are not foreseen and budgeted for over the long-run, well beyond the amounts and timeframes of humanitarian budgets.

The UN is also in a position to assist national authorities prepare and execute national plans to achieve compliance with international obligations. UNDP will say more on this and other aspects of UN-supported programmes on Wednesday, and UNICEF will speak tomorrow on the importance of ensuring that victim assistance is reflected in national plans and budgets as well.

Quality management

The goal relevant to quality management now reflects the need for quality in all its aspects, rather than simply in relation to safety and efficacy.

In 2003, the International Mine Action Standards for Mine Risk Education were developed and will be available on the IMAS CD-Rom to be released by the GICHD and on the IMAS website. These standards reflect the great strides that have been made in defining what works in MRE. The old methods are no longer acceptable.

Several initiatives are underway in relation to evaluation of mine action programmes and deriving lessons learned. We welcome the decision of the GICHD to develop expertise in the area of programme evaluation, and we are collaborating with James Madison University to develop a publicly accessible database of lessons learned.

Mobilization and coordination of resources

In 2003, we focused on developing a more coordinated and field-based approach to resource mobilization. We launched the new and revised Portfolio of Mine-Action Projects, which includes

UN and NGO projects. This approach, featuring the appointment of Country Portfolio Coordinators in all countries represented in the portfolio, has contributed to reinforced in-country coordination of mine action programmes. The portfolio is available in hardcopy, on CD-Rom and through E-MINE. Information about donor contributions and shortfalls is being updated on-line.

We have welcomed and supported the emergence of the Resource Mobilization Contact Group, which we believe effectively complements the work of the Mine Action Support Group in New York. We have also welcomed and encouraged the formation of donor coordination groups in the capitals of a number of mine-affected states. Such groups have provided a significant boost to resource mobilization efforts in several cases.

Advocacy

In our revised strategy, we have strengthened our advocacy goal to include a focus on all instruments and commitments that address the landmine and unexploded ordnance problem and/or advance the rights of affected persons. In this context, we have been at the forefront of efforts to promote a new Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, working in partnership with the Landmine Survivors Network and others to ensure that the needs of mine survivors are taken into account. In addition, we have highlighted non-state actors as a significant area of involvement for the United Nations, recognizing that the mine problem cannot be solved if we do not include non-state actors as part of the solution.

Conclusion

We believe that the revision of the *United Nations Mine Action Strategy for 2001-2005* has helped us to remain focused on specific and achievable objectives allowing the United Nations to make a significant contribution to the implementation of the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention during the past year.

Now all eyes are on the Nairobi Summit. We are confident that meeting the objectives in our strategy will help us to help you to make this summit into a landmark event on the road to a world in which the Vision of the UN strategy is attained: “A world free of the threat of landmines and unexploded ordnance, where individuals and communities live in a safe environment conducive to development and where mine survivors are fully integrated into their society.”