

PRESENTATION BY THE ZIMBABWE DELEGATION TO THE INTER-SESSIONAL WORK PROGRAMME ON THE OTTAWA CONVENTION ON THE BAN OF ANTI-PERSONNEL LANDMINES IN GENEVA, 21-25TH JUNE 2010

Co- Chairs, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of Zimbabwe Mine Action Centre, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to update you on the status of implementation of Article 5 by Zimbabwe.

1. At independence in 1980, Zimbabwe inherited several areas (approximately 1119 sq km) that were mined. Although minor clearance was done then, clearance began in earnest in 1998 with financial assistance from the US and EU and dried up in 2000 leaving Zimbabwe to go it alone in the last 10 years. In addition to enacting necessary enabling legislation, establishing mine action structures and destroying our stock piles, we have cleared and released over 300 sq km since 1980 and what remains to be done for Zimbabwe to complete implementation of Article 5 is to:

- a. Resurvey the mined areas in order to establish the exact extent of the mine problem in the country. The last survey which was done over 10 years ago was not comprehensive enough and hence there is need to re-establish the exact status of these minefields. While the last meeting of state parties granted us an extension to seek and receive technical assistance to deal with the remaining mine challenge, it is regrettable that we have not been able to get any.
- b. Clear the mined areas and destroy AP mines therein. I am pleased to report to the meeting that we are currently clearing the 182 sq km Sango- Crooks corner minefield on our common border with Mozambique. Progress is slow because we are using manual means and have cleared 8.5 sq km to date.
- c. Submit a request to the meeting of State Parties for an extension of the deadline for completing the destruction of AP mines in mined areas under our jurisdiction.

As to how much mined area still remains, about 800 square kilometres still remains mined to this day. There are 7 known mined areas that remain uncleared that were identified. A further 3 areas that have never been surveyed are suspected to be mined. However, the extent of the mine problem in these is not known at the moment.

2. Zimbabwe's ability of to destroy or ensure the destruction of all AP mines in mined areas under her jurisdiction has been impeded mainly by inadequate funding from the fiscus because of a depressed and constrained economy. It is important to note that Zimbabwe is doing all she can as regards demining efforts with funding from her own meagre financial resources, but the extent of the problem is jut too big for Zimbabwe to overcome within the acceptable time frame without meaningful external assistance and support. Other issues that have affected mine clearance in Zimbabwe are:

- a. Insufficient demining equipment.
- b. Lack of meaningful international mine action support since year 2000, which has left the military as the only organization doing mine clearance. We are grateful for relentless efforts by the GCIHD ISU in assisting us work towards the implementation of our Article 5 obligations.
- c. Illegal economic sanctions imposed by some potential donors that have made it impossible for Zimbabwe to access international assistance in the area of mine action. The illegal sanctions have also made it very difficult for Zimbabwe to obtain much needed survey and demining equipment which is imported.

3. Owing to equipment and financial constraints we will request another extension of 2 years just for resurveying the mined areas in order to determine the exact extent of the remaining challenge. Thereafter, we will need about 30 years to clear the mined areas under our jurisdiction, if we are to clear all mined areas on our own; but with adequate international assistance and support, we believe that we can do it in a much shorter period of 10 and ease the humanitarian suffering caused by the existence of mines in areas under our control. As regards the clearance of the existing mined areas, the time requested has been arrived at taking into account our previous experience and the following issues:

- a. Zimbabwe has limited demining capacity in terms of manpower and financial resources. If personnel and demining equipment is not significantly increased, it will be virtually impossible to achieve higher rates of clearance. At present only the military is involved in humanitarian demining operations in Zimbabwe, hence only one minefield can be cleared at a time, out of the over 7 known mined areas.

b. The nature of the terrain in the mined areas is rugged and hence it makes it difficult and slow to work on.

c. All of the minefields in Zimbabwe are more than 30 years old and overgrown with vegetation which makes it difficult to work on them. In addition, soil erosion has displaced some of the mines or has resulted in some of the mines being buried deeper than is normal, thus making detection and clearance difficult. It follows therefore that they would require more time to clear than would be normal.

d. The density of mines in Zimbabwe's mined areas is high and impacts negatively on the speed of mine clearance and thus renders the whole clearance exercise to be more dangerous, laborious and slow.

4. As regards Zimbabwe's plan to destroy or ensure the destruction of all Anti-Personnel Mines in mined areas under your State's jurisdiction: Zimbabwe intends to continue using the military for humanitarian demining. If the economic situation and funds permit, the military demining operational capability will be expanded. Zimbabwe will also welcome the involvement of local civilian deminers/demining companies, subject to availability of donor funding. International mine action donor organizations and companies will also be requested or are welcome to come to our assistance in any way possible.

5. There are no major structural or technical changes that have been planned for the period of extension to ensure that Zimbabwe meets her Article 5 obligations in the requested time frame. However, there are plans to review the national action plan for the implementation of Article 5 in August 2010. There are also plans, if additional funding is made available, to expand the survey capability and as alluded to earlier, also expand the military humanitarian capability in order to increase the rate of clearance.

Subject to the availability of funding that we requested from the UNDP, Zimbabwe is planning to convene an international workshop on the clearance of landmines in Zimbabwe with a view to; stimulating interest on mine clearance in Zimbabwe and courting international support on the issue as well as increasing awareness of the mine problem in Zimbabwe on the part of all stakeholders.

6. As regards the financial and technical means that Zimbabwe has dedicated and will continue to dedicate for mine clearance: the Government of Zimbabwe funds the employment costs for the deminers i.e. salaries and allowances. It also funds all mine action activities i.e. Survey, Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Victim Assistance. Through the Defence budget, the government also funds the acquisition and maintenance of humanitarian demining equipment. The State also provides for the operational costs for the Zimbabwe Mine Action Centre (ZIMAC) which in 2010 is US\$100 000.00.

It must again be emphasized that the Zimbabwean economy is still constrained due to illegal sanctions, and as such the Government of Zimbabwe will only be able to increase both financial and technical resources for demining only when the economy is fully recovered.

We have discussed with the UNDP country office on the possibility of a United Nations Mine Action Team being seconded to Zimbabwe for technical support and to act as the focal point for technical and donor financial support. We believe that this approach might bring positive results in aiding Zimbabwe to deal with the mammoth remaining AP mine challenge and fulfill our Article 5 obligations in the requested time frame.

7. Zimbabwe is still committed to the success of AP Mine Ban Convention. We are sparing no effort and are doing all that is possible to fulfill our obligations under Article 5 but are seriously hampered by resource constraints and lack of capacity. Our situation as Zimbabwe has changed significantly from the time that we ratified the Ottawa Convention. Then there were no illegal economic sanctions and we enjoyed immense international support in mine action from those countries that had the potential to assist, NGOs and International Organisations that were party to the Convention. Owing to the size of the mine problem, our fulfillment of Article 5 was then and still continues to be premised in the main, on international assistance and cooperation. Despite the humanitarian nature of the mined areas problem in Zimbabwe, potential donor countries, NGOs and the UN have not lent any meaningful mine action assistance and support to Zimbabwe. It is against this background that we appeal for international assistance and cooperation as envisaged in the Convention in order for us to get rid of mined areas under our control.

While it remains our burden to clear mined areas under our control and contribute to a mine free world, it is our considered view that with international cooperation and assistance we can do much more to meet our obligations in the set time frame. Politicisation of humanitarian demining assistance as has happened over the last decade in the case of Zimbabwe, is not in consonance with the letter and spirit of the AP Mine Ban Convention and the Cartagena Action Plan. It will not help anyone but will certainly only extend the time taken to clear all mined areas in Zimbabwe and further perpetuate humanitarian suffering of civilians, who regrettably will continue to be killed, maimed and injured by these mines as has happened over the last 34 years. I strongly believe that we all have a collective moral responsibility to ensure that this does not remain the case and to this end we fully subscribe to the idea of establishing a Standing Committee on Resources. Thank you for listening.