

***Intersessional Meetings of the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance,
Mine Risk Education and Mine Clearance Technologies***

***The Road to Fulfilling Article 5 Obligations:
Jordan's Mine Clearance Efforts***

COMMENTS BY

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Thank you Mr. Co-Chairman.

Your Royal Highness, Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen....

It gives me great pleasure to address this Standing Committee today. I would like to take a few minutes of your time to describe how Jordan has attempted to fulfill its Article 5 obligations and what it plans to do to become free of landmines by the year 2009.

For ease and clarity, I will follow the guidance offered by the Co-Chairs, and respond specifically to the questions raised in the questionnaire distributed to the States Parties in the lead-up to this meeting.

In answer to Question One:

Jordan's plan to clear its minefields that constitutes an area of 35 million m² is in three parts:

First, by the spring of 2008, Jordan hopes to demine all the Israeli minefields on its territory found along its western border with Israel. This will total 12 million m², i.e. 30% of the total remaining landmine threat.

Second, by 2009, we plan to have demined the remaining Jordanian minefields in the Jordan Valley. This will total 8 million m², i.e. 27% of the total remaining landmine threat.

And **finally**, the northern border mine-belt with Syria that has an area approximately 15 million m², i.e. 43% of the total remaining landmine threat, will also be demined by the spring of 2009.

As for Question Two: Progress in the Implementation of the National Demining Plan:

Since we met in Zagreb, a number of major projects have either commenced or are just about to begin. They include:

- Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) project. This project to demine the Israeli minefields in the Wadi Araba region that runs from the Dead Sea to the Red Sea in Aqaba is set to begin. This task is expected to take 2 years and will reduce the known affected area in the Kingdom by one-third. NPA is in the process of establishing and training its teams and will start

actual work in June. The initial funding for this initiative has come from the Government of Norway.

- Additionally, the EC has funded a project to clear a high impact area in the northern part of the Jordan Valley called 'Baqura / North Shunah.' The minefields in this area are a mixture of both Jordanian and Israeli minefields that comprise an area of approximately 1.5 million m². The Jordanian Armed Forces will undertake the clearance and it is soon to commence. The result will be the availability of highly arable land for development in one of the most densely populated and poverty stricken regions of the country.
- Also, to help better coordinate, plan, and prioritize the upcoming three years of activity Jordan will undertake a significantly re-modeled Landmine Impact Survey. However, since a great percentage of the information needed is readily available, it has been determined that a **Landmine Retrofit Survey** tailored to our needs is all that is required. Funding from Norway and Canada has been secured for this project.

In response to Question Three:

In order for Jordan to be in compliance with its treaty obligations, it has to clear approximately 35 million m² of suspected hazardous area, roughly 200,000 mines by May 2009. Mr. Chairman, our Royal Engineering Corps has represented the sole clearance capacity in Jordan since 1993 -- *they have done a great job* – and we are thrilled that NPA has begun operations, however for the Kingdom to meet its Treaty obligations, we will need even greater mine clearance capacity so that we can accelerate towards 2009.

As for Question Four: Our Remaining Challenges

We hope we do not face any impediments that may hinder our efforts, such as funding gaps, difficulties in keeping the issue a priority when only a few mines remain, and the regional political upheaval surrounding the Kingdom which all could affect our plans.

Aside from these external risks, we have identified **3** major issues that we consider paramount to fulfilling our Article 5 obligations:

First, as I mentioned, we *believe we need to enhance our demining capacity*, in order to increase annual clearance rates. If operations in the area along the Syrian border could begin in 2006/07, we believe that our 2009 completion date would be even more secure.

Second, the Jordan Armed forces could benefit from further technical assistance and training so that the systems and techniques used by the Royal Engineering Corps become even more efficient and productive.

Third, the need to attract, train, and retain technical and managerial staff to the NCDR is critical to the overall success of Jordan's efforts to meet its Article 5 deadline. Focused capacity development support is still needed as the Government's ability to contribute more to mine action is stretched to the limit.

In answering Question Five

The Government of Jordan is highly committed to its mine action program and does its utmost to support it. For example, it contributes US\$ 3.5 million annually to the Jordan Demining program and covers the running costs of NCDR.

On another level, the Jordan Armed Forces provides NCDR with a number of staff members on secondment basis, and its Royal Engineering Corps has appointed one of its senior staff as liaison officer to the NCDR to ensure full cooperation and coordination between the two bodies.

Regarding Question Six

Mr. Co-Chair, as I am sure you are aware, mine action in Jordan is managed by the **National Committee for Demining & Rehabilitation** which works very closely with all national & international stakeholders and partners (civil society, the military, the UN, donor countries, NGOs). The NCDR is delighted that it has managed to garner the political will necessary within Jordan to give 'mine action' the attention it duly deserves. There is a renewed sense of ownership and commitment to deal with the problem within the government and military which bodes well for the future.

The NCDR has greatly enhanced its own capacity as an effective organization and as of last year launched Jordan's first 'National Plan for Mine Action' which it is in the process of implementing. The NCDR has been fortunate since the Zagreb Conference to have secured some major funding for the demining projects that I mentioned earlier in my presentation and progress on all fronts has been substantial. One of the remaining challenges, however, is to maintain the momentum so that the NCDR remains capable and poised to lead and manage the national mine action programme. In this context continued support for capacity building is an important area that must not be overlooked.

And lastly, in answer to Question Seven: Jordan's Priorities for External Assistance to Support its Fulfillment of Article 5 Obligations

Following on from my comments to Question #4, we have **3** major funding priorities, they are:

First, mobilizing support for the clearance of the Syrian border mine-belt. Mr Chairman, let me point out that the minefields found along our northern border do not pose a great technical challenge as they are marked and fenced. What they do pose is an operational challenge, one that could be overcome if we could attract more resources for either the REC, NPA, or a new operator to begin working in Jordan. We are open and willing to work in partnership to tackle this solvable problem.

Second, continued support for our Royal Engineers on the training and equipment front so they can continue their good work is essential.

Third, modest support for the NCDR in the form of training and institutional capacity development is also high on our agenda.

Mr. Co-Chair, I have tried to keep my comments brief and focused on what we in Jordan have accomplished since our meetings in Zagreb last December. I do hope they have helped shed some light on the situation in Jordan and would be happy to answer any follow-up questions that you might have.

Thank You.