



Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Eleventh Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
(11MSP)

Presented

By

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Check against Delivery

*Excellencies,
Distinguished colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I am very pleased to be here amongst representatives of State Parties to the Mine Ban Convention, colleagues and friends.

Over nine years ago, Afghanistan signed and ratified the Mine Ban Convention, showing the commitment of the Afghan government to eradicating anti-personnel mines from the country. When Afghanistan signed in March 2003, there were 987 square kilometers of land inaccessible due to the presence of AP mines, AT mines and other remnants of war. Now 593 sq km square kilometers remain inaccessible, affecting just under 2,000 communities. The programme has whittled down by over a third the total contamination despite new minefields being reported in the same period; this is indeed progress.

To eliminate the threat of mines, ANDMA, the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority, has been working in close partnership with the Department of Mine Clearance, the United Nations-supported Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan and our many implementing partners. We share a unity of purpose and a common vision, and an understanding of the crucial impact of landmines on livelihoods and development.

Since 2003, and despite significant challenges, progress has been made. In that time, our implementing partners have destroyed over 280,000 anti-personnel mines, preventing scores of civilian deaths and injuries. They have also delivered Mine Risk Education to almost 5 million women and girls, and almost 7 million men and boys throughout the country. Significant resources have been deployed to clear mines: at the moment, we have over 14,000 Afghan staff working in demining. This includes some 1,400 community-based deminers engaged by the programme, which has created jobs and improved livelihoods in villages affected by mines.

Overall, casualty rates from have fallen dramatically – from a high of 77 per month, on average, in 2003 to an average of 34 per month now.

However, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that non-state actors are employing IEDs in Afghanistan some of which fall under the definition of landmines under the terms of the Ottawa Convention. Day-to-day casualties caused by IEDs exceed those of landmines and ERWs, with an average of 103 casualties per month in the first half of 2011. The Mine Action Programme does not clear operational IEDs but our partners do clear remnant IEDs - devices that have been abandoned and are not located in active fighting areas. Operational IEDs are cleared by the Afghan police and military and international forces.

Ladies and Gentlemen, It is clear that we will not be able to complete the removal of AP threats by 2013.

As I said earlier 593 square kilometers of land are contaminated by various types of hazard; 326 square kilometers are contaminated by anti-personnel landmines, 260 are contaminated by anti-tank mines and the remaining 7 contain ERW. However, I'd like to bring to your attention that, as development occurs and populations move, our partners discover hazards that were previously unknown, which adds to the tally of hazardous areas.

None-the-less we are confident that, with sustained and committed donor support, we will achieve a mine-free Afghanistan. We, along with the rest of the Afghan government, the Department of Mine Clearance, the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan and our implementing partners are now working on the detailed submission for an extension that will allow us to address the issue of anti-personnel landmines, remembering that anti-tank mines and ERWs also require attention.

The Afghan Government and people appreciate the long-standing support of the international community. I am pleased to say that to date, donors have shown abiding commitment to supporting our Mine Action Programme. I would like to thank the following States for their support: The United States of America, Japan, Canada, the Netherlands, Germany, Australia, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Denmark, Ireland,

We are now finalizing a framework that will shift full responsibility for coordination to ANDMA and the Department of Mine Clearance whilst retaining the professional capacity developed by the United Nations and other partners. We are confident that this will lead to an even stronger programme that is well integrated within government structures and has the support of donors, partners and communities.

Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss our progress and priorities today, and to renew our commitment to working towards a world free from the threat of landmines.

Thank you very much.