



Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Afghanistan's Statement on Clearing Mine Areas

13th Meeting of Members of State Parties

To

Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

Geneva

2 – 5 December 2013

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Afghan delegation, I have the honor of presenting the achievements and challenges faced by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan regarding the implementation of Article Five of the Convention.

In the 12th Meeting of the States Parties, the deadline for Afghanistan regarding Article Five of the Convention was extended until the end of March 2023. In this regard, I would like to renew my Government's gratefulness to the States Parties for granting the extension.

The Extension Request came into being on 1st April this year, coinciding with the beginning of the Afghan year 1392.

For year one of the extension request, the target is to clear 1,034 minefields and battlefields covering an area of 79 sq km. In the period from 1st April to 31st October 2013, 765 minefields and battlefields amounting to an area of 49.9 sq km have been cleared and 96 sites covering an area of 7.2 sq km have been cancelled.

All in all, this represents a progress rate of 72% against the target for the current year. In other words, almost three quarters of the planned output has been achieved in the first seven months of the year. Fortunately, this means that we are on target taking reduced productivity in coming winter into account. As a result of this clearance, 14,187 antipersonnel mines, 438 antitank mines and over half a million ERW have been destroyed.

In the same period above, 368,000 Afghans including men, women, boys and girls were provided training in mine and ERW risk education.

Please note that a two-year national non-technical survey, which was part of the Extension Request, is being implemented in Afghanistan since May 2012. This is to validate the Landmine Impact Survey and other survey information available in the national database from 2005 and before that.

The objective of this survey is to visit every community in Afghanistan whether impacted or not. The results of this non-technical survey are important, as this will ensure that all the data is captured and that the available data on the impact of mines and ERW is updated in the National Database.

The plan is to visit 597 impacted communities and 11,852 not known to be impacted communities in the 1st year of the Extension Request. In first seven months, 336 impacted communities and 12,519 not known to be impacted communities were visited. Of the not known to be impacted communities visited, 5,250 of them were in the Gazetteer but 7,269 communities were not– this means that either they were newly established communities or had been previously missed from the National Gazetteer.

This increased number of communities to visit has negatively impacted our plan to finish the survey in the first 2 years. In first seven months of the survey, 96 hazards with an area of 7.2 sq km were cancelled but 250 hazards with an area of 12.8 sq km which were missed from previous surveys discovered.

Regarding the budget, as a result of several reviews and revisions of the operations plan and improvements in demining techniques, we have revised the budget. The Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan has been striving endlessly to continually improve its demining techniques.

A recent trial on the application of mechanical demining operations and the adjustment of manual demining teams' productivity based on their recent achievements, showed that we can achieve a higher productivity rate than was initially anticipated in the extension request. Based on these revised productivity rates, we recalculated the budget for our 10 year work plan, bringing the overall cost of the Extension Request from the USD 544 million that was estimated at the time of submission to USD 434 million; a reduction of USD 110 million. The budget for the first year has fallen from USD 87 million to USD 73 million. This is definitely good news for both the GIRoA and the donor community.

Though the funds required for year one have been secured, it is worth mentioning that this year MAPA has received USD 24 million less than the previous year. This indicates a significant drop in the overall annual funding for MAPA. While you all know that the Extension Request is for 10 years, the problem could be solved sooner if the financial support provided by donors in recent years can be maintained.

In last three years, MAPA had been employing 14,000 deminers. However, 4,000 Afghan deminers out of these 14,000 have lost their jobs in the last six months due to reduction in funding.

The good news is that the equipment and the experienced capacity continue to be available on the ground; all we need is the financial support to deliver.

We are in the 8th month of the operational year 1392. If receive more funds this year, we shall bring forward hazards from the later years of the work plan, which will help the Afghan Government fulfill its obligation against Article Five of the Ottawa Convention in less than 10 years.

On behalf of my Government, I would like to thank the people and Governments of donor countries for their generous contributions in support of the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan. I would like to name them here: The United States of America is MAPA's biggest donor. Other donors include Japan, Germany, Canada, Australia, United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden, Netherland, Finland, Ireland, Norway, UAE, Belgium, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Korea, Oman, Austria, Luxembourg and Lithuania. Many of these donors fund through the Voluntary Trust Fund for Mine Action administered by UNMAS. We are grateful to UNMAS for their financial support and also technical advice and capacity building. Certainly, without donors support, we would not be able to achieve our 1392 target against Article Five of the Convention. I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to the honorable donor community to maintain their contributions until the problem of mines and ERW in Afghanistan has been eliminated.

Notwithstanding the achievements we had in year one of the extension request, insecurity resulting from the ongoing conflict remains a major challenge for the implementation of the Article Five of the Convention in my country. It is not only impeding the smooth delivery of demining services in some parts of the country but it has also left behind new ERW contamination in battlefields and military firing ranges.

Thank you all for your attention.