



**Government of Afghanistan
Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

Statement regarding:

Clearing Mined Areas

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**Sixth Meeting of States Parties to The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use,
Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction**

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[CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY]**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be here today to address the Sixth Meeting of States Parties to *The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction*. I would like to use the time now to brief you on the progress made in clearing emplaced antipersonnel mines and other explosive devices in Afghanistan and our plans for the years to come.

As many of you may know, Afghanistan was the first country where the international assistance community supported what is now known as Humanitarian Mine Clearance. This was in 1988, a full ten years before the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention came into force. I am pleased to announce that since then Afghan deminers have cleared one billion square meters of landmine and unexploded ordnance contaminated land. We pay tribute to these brave men – particularly those martyred or injured in the course of their duties – who work hard to help their fellow Afghans live safer and more productive lives.

On the planning front, I am also pleased to announce that the Landmine Impact Survey Certification Committee granted certification to the Afghanistan Landmine Impact Survey – the ALIS – in September this year. I would like to thank the European Commission, Canada and Germany for their support to the ALIS. I would also like to thank the United Nations, the Survey Action Center and the Afghan Mine Clearance Planning Agency for all the work they did over the years to make this survey happen.

The key findings of the ALIS are as follows:

- Some 2,368 communities in Afghanistan are impacted by mines/UXO.
- 4.2 million Afghans are thought to be living in or planning to return to these communities – this is almost one in five Afghans.
- Turning to the casualty figures:
 - 2,245 casualties were recorded during the survey – this translates to 93 casualties a month.
 - 90 percent of the recorded casualties are male.
 - A shockingly high 17 percent are between the ages of five to 14.

Now that we have certified results, I would like to emphatically state that 2005 represents a turning point for mine action planning in Afghanistan. Afghan mine action experts, and their international colleagues, are hard at work translating these findings into a strategy for the next three years and a planned further strategy for 2009-2013. In brief: with the LIS data, we can now plan to clear all high impact mined areas by 2007, all medium impact mined areas by 2009, and God willing meet our Ottawa Convention clearance deadline by 2013.

Furthermore, whereas for the past 15 years the leading indicator of success has been the clearance of emplaced explosive devices, in the future we will also measure our success in terms of outcomes, rather than simply outputs; we will focus more explicitly on how clearance and other mine action activities contribute to the improvement of the lives of Afghans.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I now turn to the delicate issue of money. The people of Afghanistan are grateful for the support that has been provided during these past 15 years of struggle against the landmine, and in particular for the very generous support provided since 2002. This support has allowed us to double our clearance capacity in the past three years. Humanitarian deminers in Afghanistan are now clearing 100 million square meters a year, which we believe is the highest rate anywhere in the world. This clearance costs 100 million dollars a year, or one dollar per square meter. While we are constantly striving to cut costs, including through the increased use of mine detection dogs and mechanical systems, it is clear that Afghanistan will require hundreds of millions of dollars of additional support from the international community, including at least 225 million dollars in the next three years.

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has set out a vision of an *Afghanistan free from landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW), where individuals and communities live in a safe environment conducive to national development and where landmine and ERW survivors are fully integrated in society and thus have their rights and needs recognised and fulfilled*. We hope and pray that our international partners will help us to achieve this vision.

Thank you for your kind attention.