

**Statement of the Thai Delegation  
on Clearing Mined Areas (Agenda Item 11 c.)  
30 November 2005**

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**Chairperson,**

**Distinguished Delegates,**

It is an honour for me to take the floor and share with you the current status of mine clearance in Thailand. Due to limited time, my presentation will revolve around 3 major themes, namely (1) progress on Thailand's mine clearance, (2) development of practical plans, responses to challenges and need for partnership, and (3) socio-economic factors bearing on mine clearance. I hope that details presented under the three themes would, by and large, respond to action points no. 17 to 22 of the Nairobi Action Plan, Section III on clearing mined areas.

Let me begin with the progress Thailand has made on mine clearance, especially following the First Review Conference up until today. During 2004 to August 2005, all statistics show that mine clearance in Thailand has proceeded in acceleration. Over 2 millions square meters have been de-mined (2,725,069 sq.m), which amount to more than double the combined de-mined areas of the earlier four years (2000 to 2003). This increase resulted partly from accumulative learning, better use of existing equipment and technology, together with cooperation with both domestic and international partners. Thailand will definitely try to keep this momentum rolling. In 2005, areas of about seven hundred thousands square meters (713,860 sq.m.) have already been cleared and verified as mine-free. In addition, over 3 million square meters (3,786,140 sq.m.) have been de-mined and are now pending further verification.

Despite the progress in recent years, some may argue that the areas already de-mined still constitute less than 1 percent of the reportedly mine-affected areas within the country (i.e. 2556.7 square kilometers). This figure may

not be as alarming and invincible as it appears for at least two reasons. First, the estimation of mine-affected areas in Thailand (whose size is almost as large as France) is derived basically from the Level I Impact Survey, which was conducted during a short period from September 2000 to May 2001. The present clearance operation, now based on area reduction techniques, indicates some positive deviation from the preliminary estimation by the Level I Impact Survey. Secondly, according to the same Impact Survey, only 13.02 percent of the estimated mine-affected areas (or about 332.88 square kilometers) are high-impact areas (i.e. directly affecting the lives of people). The rest of almost 87 percent are medium- (43.96 percent) or low-impact (43.02 percent) areas, mainly consisting of mountains, deep forests and deserted woods. The majority of suspected areas in Thailand could, in fact, sufficiently be dealt with by marking and fencing. What we urgently need now is detailed technical planning that would guide marking and clearance operations in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

This brings me to the second theme of concern within Thailand's Master Plan for Humanitarian Mine Action 2005-2009 and the Mine Clearance Concept Paper. In 2005, Thailand Mine Action Center (TMAC) has developed these two documents with a view to fulfilling our obligations under Article V (on Destruction of anti-personnel mines in mined areas). The Humanitarian Mine Action Master Plan touches upon the problem of rudimentary data contained in the Level I Impact Survey. Given limited domestic resources, it also proposes a second-best strategy of simultaneous clearance and survey by an area reduction technique, which is now under operation by TMAC. The first-best strategy would be to conduct a Level II Impact Survey, which is a far more costly, time consuming and complicated task, and would definitely require international cooperation.

As for the Concept Paper for Mine Clearance, TMAC has developed it as a detailed work plan along the lines of recommendations contained in the

Humanitarian Mine Action Master Plan. Priority areas are identified in terms of urgency and practicality, proceeding from high impacted border areas of (1) Thailand-Cambodia, (2) Thailand-Laos, (3) Thailand-Malaysia, to (4) Thailand-Myanmar border areas. In each border area, local authorities and communities will be asked to define specific plots of mine-contaminated land they deem essential for mine clearance. Different project proposals for mine clearance will then be written on the basis of these locally driven demands and, given limited public resources, could be submitted for “adoption” by interested parties, such as private donors, socially concerned corporations, or international agencies. In this regard, Thailand will highly appreciate advisory assistance and technical cooperation on how we could develop practical proposals that are up to international standards. We hope that by breaking down mined areas into manageable projects, clearance operations in Thailand would proceed at a faster pace and our goal of fulfilling Article 5 obligations would not be too far removed from our reach.

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Mine clearance in Thailand is not an end in itself but a means to improve the quality of life and well-being of people. It is rewarding that under ongoing mine clearance together with mine risk education, Thailand has witnessed a decrease in the number of new mine victims.

Furthermore, the areas cleared of mines have been handed over to responsible authorities and local communities for utilization. Out of the former mine fields amounting to almost 4 millions square meters (3,518,698 sq.m.), 54.4 percent (1,914,344 sq.m.) are now fertile agricultural areas, including rice fields and crops plantations, 25.71 percent (904,600 sq.m.) have been developed into tourist destinations, 14.89 percent (523,754 sq.m.) have become markets and

trading facilities in the border areas, and 5 percent (176,000 sq.m.) are given to schools and local communities for their proper use. Thailand and some of her neighbouring countries are now exploring the possibility of joint de-mining operations along our border areas, in order to ensure the socioeconomic aspects of mine clearance are met to the full.

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At the First Review Conference, States Parties adopted the Nairobi Plan of Action 2005-2009 as a guideline for implementation and cooperation in order to achieve the core objectives of the Convention. Regarding mine clearance, action points no. 17 to 22 encourage mine-affected countries to urgently identify all mined areas, develop and implement national clearance plans, make these plans together with problems, progress and priorities for assistance known, and intensify mine clearance and education programs to reduce risks of their populations. At the same time, action point no. 23 also reiterates the obligation to assist, on the part of States Parties in a position to do so.

My presentation shows that Thailand has tried its best through our practices to fulfill our commitment to the Action Plan. Still, the road ahead is never rosy and there remain so many rivers to cross. Despite all the challenges, Thailand strongly believes in the spirit of partnership that distinguishes this Convention from other multilateral fora. In order to keep the momentum of mine clearance rolling, Thailand will continue to reach in and out for synergy with civil society, private sectors as well as concerned countries and international agencies. Thailand simply hopes that all our partners would respond with enthusiasm and join us in our fight against the difficult odds we face.

Thank you.

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