



THE UNITED NATIONS MINE ACTION

Statement of the United Nations Mine Action Team to the 8th Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty (Dead Sea, Jordan, 18-22 November 2007)

Mr. President, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

At this Eighth Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty, the United Nations Mine Action Team, comprising 14 United Nations Departments, Agencies, Funds, and Programmes¹, wishes to report on progress made in assisting mine-affected States Parties to fulfil their treaty obligations and describe the support provided to mine-affected communities in other countries and territories.

The United Nations is working to reduce death and injury from landmines and explosive remnants of war in more than 40 countries and territories², three-quarters of which have ratified or acceded to the Treaty. The Mine Ban Treaty is a fundamental component of the normative framework that underpins United Nations mine action and is a testament to what can be achieved when the international community works collectively to tackle a grave humanitarian and development challenge.

The United Nations is working to reduce the humanitarian and socio-economic threats posed by landmines and explosive remnants of war while supporting governments to build sustainable national mine action capacity to manage, coordinate and implement mine action activities so that United Nations assistance is no longer necessary. We are happy to report that, since the last Meeting of States Parties, the Government of Burundi with the support of the United Nations Development Programme has taken over the management of the country's Mine Action Coordination Centre from the United Nations Mine Action Service. The Yemeni national mine action programme no longer requires technical advice from the United Nations Development Programme. An Afghan now serves as Director of the Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan, and the national Mine Action Consultative Working Group has been strengthened. In Angola, national nongovernmental

¹ UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS), UN Office of Disarmament Affairs (ODA), UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women (OSAGI), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO) and World Bank.

² Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Cambodia, Chad, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea Bissau, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, occupied Palestinian territory, Russian Federation (Chechnya), Republic of Serbia (Kosovo), Senegal, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uganda, Viet Nam, Western Sahara, Yemen, Zambia

organizations have assumed responsibility for mine risk education, supported by the national mine action centre.

We reported on our efforts to assist States Parties during the meetings of the Standing Committees in April 2007, and much of this information is now reflected in the Dead Sea Progress Report. In the interest of time, we will take the opportunity afforded under each agenda item to highlight some of our activities that contribute to the implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty. In doing so, we will make use of the structure of the Nairobi Action Plan.

Universalization (Actions #1-8 of the Nairobi Action Plan)

On the occasion of the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, the United Nations Secretary-General encouraged all Member States to accede to the Mine Ban Treaty.

We warmly welcome the recent accessions to the Treaty of Montenegro, Indonesia, Kuwait, and, in particular, Iraq, a heavily mine-affected country that has been receiving United Nations mine action support for some time.

The United Nations Mine Action Team, in collaboration with the Implementation Support Unit, organized a half-day workshop in the margins of the 10th International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and United Nations Advisors. The workshop provided an opportunity to advocate for adherence to the Treaty by mine-affected countries that receive United Nations support but are not yet States Parties.

Stockpile destruction (Actions #9-16 of the Nairobi Action Plan)

The United Nations provided stockpile destruction assistance to six of the 14 States Parties with Article 4 deadlines occurring in 2007 or early 2008 (Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Sudan). The Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola fulfilled their obligations with the support, respectively, of the United Nations Mine Action Service and the United Nations Development Programme. Afghanistan, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme, concluded its stockpile destruction activities this year, slightly after its 1 March 2007 deadline. Sudan and Burundi have initiated their stockpile destruction activities to meet their Article 4 deadlines on 1 April 2008. The United Nations Mine Action Service initiated stockpile destruction activities in the territory of Western Sahara this year.

Clearing mined-areas (Actions #17-28 of the Nairobi Action Plan)

The United Nations Mine Action Team is working together with governments and mine action organizations to advance demining by assisting national programmes to adopt new approaches that ensure more efficient use of resources and the release of more land in less time. We are gratified that the informal discussions under agenda item 12 will examine land release as a practical means to overcome challenges in the implementation of Article 5.

With regards to the identification of all affected areas, during the past year the United Nations has cooperated with others to provide assistance to Angola, Guinea Bissau, Malawi, Mauritania, Senegal, Sudan and Uganda with survey activities.

The United Nations Development Programme's Completion Initiative to assist States Parties with a relatively modest anti-personnel mine problem to develop a national strategy to meet their Article 5 obligations in collaboration with donors and implementing partners is making progress in Albania, Malawi, Mauritania and Zambia.

Also during this reporting period, the United Nations has contributed to the development of national mine action plans in Afghanistan, Uganda, Tajikistan and Yemen, as well as refining or updating national mine action strategies in Mauritania, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and Senegal.

In the area of mine risk education, new projects supported by the United Nations are taking place in Nepal and have been intensified in Lebanon in addition to programmes in some 20 other countries. UNICEF and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining have recently concluded work on a 'Guide to Marking in Mine Action' and initiated another study on approaches to community liaison. UNICEF contributed to the training of mine risk education personnel and/or to the development of mine risk education plans in Burundi, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Tajikistan.

Gender (in relation to Actions #21 and #35 of the Nairobi Action Plan)

The United Nations is committed to mainstreaming gender considerations in all areas of our work and, specifically in mine action. We have therefore taken concrete steps to ensure that we take the needs and concerns of women, men, girls and boys into account as we plan, staff and implement our activities.

In addition to the production of the 'Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes', our Inter-Agency Coordination Steering Committee on Gender and Mine Action has organized regional workshops to build the capacity of mine action staff and national authorities in the area of gender mainstreaming and gender balance, and to help ensure that specific mine action initiatives are gender-sensitive. In addition to the six action plans drafted in Dubai in 2006, seven country programs met in September 2007 in Nairobi and drafted action plans that integrate gender considerations into their planned activities in survey, mine risk education, clearance and victim assistance.

Exchange of equipment and material and share of mine action techniques, technologies and procedures (Actions #25-26 of the Nairobi Action Plan)

The United Nations Mine Action Service, the United Nations Development Programme, and UNICEF facilitate training to national mine action operators in partnership with others, including Cranfield University and James Madison University, through workshops and other activities. The 10th International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and United Nations Advisors was again an opportunity to exchange experiences and good practices on mine action technologies. Next year, this meeting will be convened in a mine-affected State Party.

Victim assistance (Actions # 29-39 of the Nairobi Action Plan)

We are pleased to note that 27 percent of the projects in the 2008 Portfolio of Mine Action Projects were dedicated to victim assistance programmes – the highest percentage to date.

Unfortunately we note that only 20 percent of these projects received funding and would therefore encourage those in a position to do so to support survivor assistance initiatives.

During the course of the past year, the United Nations supported victim assistance activities in a number of States Parties, including Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Cambodia, Colombia, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Jordan, Sudan, Tajikistan, Uganda and Yemen. The United Nations also supported victim assistance in Lao People's Democratic Republic.

The United Nations Mine Action Team is innovating in this area. The United Nations Human Security Trust Fund project in Sudan, supported by the United Nations Mine Action Service, the United Nations Development Programme, and UNICEF has resulted in the development of a National Strategic Framework and Work Plan for Victim Assistance for 2007 through 2011.

Pursuant to Action 33 of the Nairobi Action Plan, we are active advocates for ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by countries affected by mines and explosive remnants of war and we always highlight the way in which this new treaty supplements the victim assistance provisions of the Mine Ban Treaty.

In this regard, the United Nations and Landmine Survivors Network have organized a side event on victim assistance and disability rights during the Eighth Meeting of States Parties on Wednesday, 21 November, at lunch time, to generate awareness of the relevance of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability as a framework for action by the mine action community.

Cooperation and assistance (Actions #40-50 of the Nairobi Action Plan)

We have instituted a new, cost-effective and efficient web-based method for developing the annual Portfolio of Mine Action Projects, allowing field programmes to input data on-line and to monitor and update content throughout the year. We will launch the 2008 Portfolio during a side event at 2 p.m. on Tuesday 20 November.

Contributions to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action reached US\$119,908,907 for the 2006-7 biennium as of 31 July 2007. We appreciate this support from the donor community and encourage continued commitment.

The United Nations is, in collaboration with other stakeholders, implementing and supporting clearance and other mine action activities in 30 States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty to reduce and ultimately eliminate the humanitarian and socio-economic impact of landmines and explosive remnants of war. Through the reduction and cancellation of suspected hazard areas, it is expected that these efforts will greatly reduce the time required to achieve the requirements of Article 5 for many States Parties.

- Mainstreaming mine action into development

Further to Action #45 of the Nairobi Action Plan, the United Nations Mine Action Team is advising States on mainstreaming mine action into multi-sectoral planning and budgeting processes to ensure the highest socio-economic impact of mine action activities.

The United Nations Mine Action Strategy for 2006 to 2010 emphasizes the importance of mainstreaming mine action into broader development plans, budgets and programmes to support mine action planning in accordance with broader national development and reconstruction strategies to ensure the highest return from investments in demining and to encourage budgeting of national resources of mine action activities. United Nations-supported countries such as Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Chad, Croatia, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Sudan are among those countries currently mobilizing national resources to plan and finance national demining activities.

At the global level, the United Nations Development Programme together with the United Kingdom, co-chair the OECD-DAC work stream on the development of guidelines for donors for the integration of mine action, small arms and armed violence activities into development programming.

Transparency reports (Actions # 51-58 of the Nairobi Action Plan)

The United Nations provides assistance to States Parties at the country-level to prepare transparency reports as per Article 7 of the Treaty. The United Nations Development Programme has prepared a guide to Article 7 reports which has been distributed to both States and Non-States Parties to encourage voluntary reporting. The United Nations Mine Action Service and the United Nations Development Programme have taken an initiative to encourage States Parties that have not submitted initial Article 7 reports to do so in an early opportunity and offered relevant assistance.

Finally Mr. President (*or Co-Chairs*),

I wish to reaffirm the pledges made by the Secretary-General and the heads of agencies of the United Nations Mine Action Team stated on the occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the adoption of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty “to do everything within our mandates to assist mine-affected countries in meeting their obligations to clear mined areas, assist victims, destroy stockpiled mines, and educate men, women, boys and girls about the dangers of mines and explosive remnants of war.”

Thank you.