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**Statement by Lt. Gen. Tumrongsak Deemongkol,  
Director of Thailand Mine Action Center  
on Agenda 11 Informal presentation of requests submitted  
under Article 5 and of the analysis of these requests  
at the Ninth Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention  
Geneva, Switzerland  
25-26 November 2008**

Mr. President,

Our deadline on mine clearance is 1 May 2009. Thailand is here to speak frankly about the obstacles and difficulties we face. At the same time we wish to reassure all States Parties of our unwavering commitment to the Convention and our obligations on mine clearance.

Mr. President,

Let me take this opportunity to provide States Parties with information on the following issues: 1) a brief review of Thailand's progress on mine clearance 2) circumstances within Thailand's extension request and 3) new developments on Thailand's mine action.

Review of Thailand's progress on mine clearance

Thailand's demining efforts have been conducted by the Thailand Mine Action Centre (TMAC) established by the National Mine Action Committee. Initially, the Landmine Impact Survey (LIS) carried out by the Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), identified an estimated 2,557 square kilometers of mine-contaminated area, most of which are found along the Thai-Cambodian border.

However, various factors have delayed our efforts.

First was the employment of the "Traditional Manual Clearance Method" between 2002-2006. This method is costly, time-consuming and requires

skilled personnel. In 2007, we began to employ the “locating minefield procedure (LMP). This method has enabled us to dramatically improve our clearance rate and release an increased area of safe land. It is now projected that only 528.2 square kilometers remain to be released.

Secondly, the survey conducted by the LIS had initially identified 2,557 square kilometers as mine-suspected areas. The figure was an overestimation. Because the mine-suspected area was over-estimated by such an extent, this created unnecessary costs in terms of time and resources while also necessitating a resurvey of the suspected areas.

Thirdly, geographical uncertainties involving ongoing conflict in some neighboring countries as well as unsettled border demarcation between Thailand and neighboring countries have also caused delays.

Fourthly, uncertainties of mine-affected areas have further impeded demining operations. For instance, apart from having no record of the total number of mines buried, the minefields were also unmarked.

The fifth factor hampering our mine clearance efforts are the environmental and geographic factors. Minefields are uneven and cluttered with challenging natural obstacles such as mountains, rocky terrain, heavy vegetation and dense forests. Also, climatic challenges, such as the rainy season, have posed complications to deminers’ field operations as well as their health.

One of the most important challenges is the limitation of human and financial resources. In a given year, there are varied priorities and competing requests for resources. For instance, TMAC’s annual budget was reduced from 38 million baht (US\$1.1 million) in 2004 to 18 million baht (US\$530,000) in 2006. This budget reduction was due to emergency situations such as flooding and the tsunami disaster. However, in recent years, TMAC’s budget has increased.

Lastly, Thailand's mine clearance efforts would be greatly facilitated if there is increased international support. Over the years, international assistance has been relatively limited, and our demining efforts have been supported mainly by the Thai Government.

#### Circumstances within Thailand's extension request

Mr. President,

Thailand requests an extension period of nine and a half years. The new deadline for the completion of our mine clearance requested is 1 November 2018.

It is estimated that by March 2009 a total area of 528.2 square kilometers will remain to be released through both demining and LMP. This figure is approximately 20 percent of the original figure of mine-suspected area identified by LIS. To achieve this target figure, Thailand will continue to employ the traditional manual clearance method and the LMP, as well as explore other appropriate methods.

*Ambitious as the plan may be, it could be completed within the extension period for the following reasons. First, the projected remaining area of 528.2 square kilometers reflects the real minefields. Therefore, it is likely that we would be able to move forward at a much faster pace. Second, Thailand now has in place a clear mine clearance plan and has substantially increased its national budget for mine clearance. However, our success ultimately depends also on annual international financial support as clearly noted in Thailand's extension request.*

Thailand has also formulated a plan on identifying priority areas for mine clearance. Top priority is given to mine-affected areas which will directly affect the safety of the local population such as those in close proximity to local communities. Our second priority are areas posing barriers to socio-economic development to local communities. Areas which will affect the natural preserve will be our third priority. Accordingly, demining operations will be conducted in areas with unsettled boundaries with our neighbours toward the final stage of our mission.

## Funding

We estimate that the total cost for Thailand's demining operation for this nine and a half year phase is approximately 17.4 billion baht (US\$512.8 million). The Thai Government shall be our principal financial provider. However, it is also vital for Thailand to receive and secure support from the international community. While we understand that there is a necessity to enhance our national capacity and coordination efforts, international assistance is key and vital to the facilitation and progress of our operations.

## New developments on Thailand's mine action

Mr. President,

On 14 August 2008 the National Mine Action Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, approved the total proposed budget of 17,435.55 million baht for TMAC's demining operations. The Committee also approved the use of 1.4 billion baht (US\$41 million) for the first year of the requested extension period (2009). This reflects the increased priority and greater political will accorded to this undertaking. This is indeed an encouraging development.

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Thai Government, I wish to reiterate once again, that despite the challenges before us, Thailand is committed to achieving a "Mine-Free, Zero-Victim" Thailand before the end of 2018. The international community can rest assured that our humanitarian commitment will be maintained until all our obligations under the Convention are fully met, and beyond that.

Thank you.

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