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

28 September 2011

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**Eleventh Meeting**

**Phnom Penh, 28 November – 2 December 2011**

Item 12 of the provisional agenda

**Consideration of requests submitted under Article 5**

**Request for extension of the deadline for completing the  
destruction of anti-personnel mines in accordance with  
article 5 of the convention**  
**Executive summary**

**Submitted by Eritrea**

1. Eritrea has been the setting for many major armed conflicts in the last century. The conflicts waged over the last several decades have left a massive legacy of landmines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW) making Eritrea one of the countries in the world hardest hit by this scourge. During the Second World War the British and Italian armies fought in Eritrea leaving behind a significant amount of unexploded ordinance (UXO). After the British victory in the Horn of Africa, the United Nations decided in 1952 to make Eritrea an autonomous entity federated with Ethiopia. Ethiopia subsequently annexed Eritrea in 1962, which sparked a struggle for independence that lasted 30 years from 1961 until 1991 and culminated in Eritrea's formal independence in 1993. The conflict resulted in considerable landmines and UXO contamination and the laying of numerous non-conventional hazardous devices in areas near military camps, roads, battle zones, strongholds of cities and populated areas, farmland and water resources. In 1998 a border conflict characterised by trench warfare broke out between Eritrea and Ethiopia resulting in a two-year war and the laying of defensive minefields by both armies along the 1,000 kilometre long common border.

2. The population groups hardest hit by landmines and UXO have been rural inhabitants, nomadic people, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the border conflict, herders and children. Beyond the killing and maiming of people, landmines and other ERW had a noticeable effect on food security and the general development situation in the country. The vast majority of the mine impacted communities in Eritrea depend on farming and herding for their livelihoods while most farm land and pasture land were blocked with land mines and scattered ERW. Likewise, a number of projects, mainly infrastructure projects such as roads, schools, clinics, and dams began being carried out following liberation of the country. The impediments of landmines and UXO to such constructions and other development projects were significant particularly in the areas of Debub and Gash Barka regions until clearance could first be conducted.

3. The first nationwide effort to identify the magnitude of the landmine and UXO contamination was through a Landmine Impact Survey (LIS) which began in March 2002 and concluded in June 2004 resulting in the identification of 914 suspected hazardous Areas (SHAs) measuring 129 square kilometres in a number of zobas and sub-zobas. Of these 914 SHAs, 752 SHAs affecting 411 communities were identified as contaminated by anti-personnel (AP) mines, a mix of AP mines and anti-tank (AT) mines or a mix of AP mines, AT mines, and UXO in Anseba (203), Debub (112), Debubawi Keih Bahri (12), Gash Barka (107), Maekela (72), and Semienawi Keih Bahri (246).

4. Prior to the LIS, incomplete gathered data records were kept by the United National Mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea Mine Action Co-ordination Centre (UNMEE MAC) from different sources. Besides Eritrean Defence Force records, several organizations contributed in conducting general surveys in areas mainly within the Temporary Security Zone (TSZ), a 25 kilometres wide area within Eritrea, and about 1,000 kilometres long along the border of Eritrea and Ethiopia, which identified 516 mined areas in the following zobas of Eritrea: Anseba, Debub, Debubawi keih bahri, Gash Barka, Maekel and Semienawi keih bahri. However, since the 516 mined areas surveyed prior to the LIS overlapped with the country wide LIS findings, the Eritrean Demining Authority (EDA) has employed the LIS findings as their baseline.

5. During the LIS there were 170 areas that could not be accessed due to accessibility (140) and security (30) reasons (some of these on the Ethiopian side). Additionally, although it was recognized that the LIS had several overlaps with the initial surveys and past clearance activities and that there were imperfections with the data collected, it is the most comprehensive picture available of the AP mine contamination throughout Eritrea. The principal weakness of the LIS was the lack of detail concerning the SHAs and therefore the requirement for resurvey in order to better quantify the remaining challenge in Eritrea.

6. In response to the impact of these weapons, from the very beginning after liberation in 1991 the Eritrean government gave the greatest attention and focus to the clearance of landmines. Military field engineers were deployed to all of the impacted areas of the country and diligently conducted the massive task to clear or at least alleviate the impact of landmines and to protect the civilian population.

7. In 1995 initial humanitarian activities started in Eritrea with an agreement between Eritrea and United States and with an indigenous organization called Eritrean Humanitarian Demining Program (EHDP) which started to operate in Eritrea until the border conflict in 1998. Consequently the landmine and other ERW contamination escalated to its worst level inflicting great losses and harm on the socioeconomic and psychological aspects of civilian life.

8. After the border conflict war was officially concluded with the signing of the “agreement on the cessation of hostilities” by both parties on December 2000, there was an increase in demining activities in Eritrea which were conducted by one Eritrean organisation, the Eritrean Demining Agency, and a number of external organizations such as DCA, HALO Trust, RONCO, DDG, MAT, UN MACC and UN contingencies etc. However, compared to the huge amount of funds that these organizations had at their disposal, the results they achieved were minimal. Moreover, the activities of these organizations were not in compliance with the national development policy and strategy.

9. In August 2001, Eritrea became a party to the Convention and became actively engaged in fulfilling its obligations. It was necessary to establish a national mine action authority to have the primary responsibility of coordinating and managing mine action and developing policies, standards, procedures and guidelines. Therefore, the Eritrean government, through proclamation 123/2002, established the Eritrean Demining Authority (EDA) in 2002 with the task of clearing landmines and returning areas to productive use,

educating Eritrean civilians of the dangers of mines and on ways to identify and report them, facilitating the repatriation of internally displaced persons and refugees and integrating mine action into the national development plans.

10. The establishment of the EDA led to the restructuring of mine action in Eritrea. The consequences of the changes caused a chain of events that led to the phasing out of contracts of most international organisations and their subsequently leaving the country. This was followed by the suspension of the Mine Action Capacity Building Programme, which was executed by the UNDP, in October 2005. Despite this fact, the EDA with a limited capacity building programme supported by the UNDP resumed its demining program in 2007. Tasks carried out at this moment were: mapping and marking of affected areas, mine risk education to the former IDPs and mine clearance on a limited scale mostly focused on the return/resettlement of IDPs/expellees. Despite a shortage of funds, the humanitarian challenges still sought to make land safe for agricultural use to support food security, to build social support systems for the most vulnerable population groups, and to create linkages with recovery, reconstruction and development of social and economic infrastructure.

11. Immediately after Eritrea's liberation in 1991 as well as right after the conclusion of the 1998-2000 border conflict with Ethiopia, army engineers carried out massive landmine/UXO clearance in the affected areas. Soon after the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia in December 2000, preparations for humanitarian action went made and became operational in 2001. Unfortunately, the management of data was not well coordinated between the different entities and was not as sophisticated and as disciplined as it should have been.

12. During the period of 2001 – 2010, 79 areas were cleared measuring 54,755,011 square meters, 30,832,678 square meters of which was cleared after the LIS, culminating in the destruction of 10,296 anti-personnel mines, 998 anti-tank mines and 69,401 UXO. All of this progress has been made in communities identified by the LIS as being affected by mines.

13. The progress indicated above has been achieved by EDA activities as well as by a number of non-governmental organizations and commercial companies which were engaged in mine clearance in Eritrea using a wealth of mine clearance tools including manual, mechanical, and dogs. Following the creation of the EDA and the departure of these organizations in 2007, as well as the subsequent drop of significant funding, Eritrea has used solely manual clearance. Nonetheless, this is seen as the best method given that it is the cheapest and most effective option to carry out mine clearance operations with the limited locally available resources and capacity. In addition, Eritrea releases land through non-technical means according to national land release standards and procedures.

14. In carrying out manual mine clearance, Eritrea has standards and standard operating procedures (SOPs) in place which take as their basis the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), prepared with the aim to provide all personnel involved in landmine and UXO clearance in Eritrea with a reference for training, operations and deployment. The safety principles displayed in the SOP are valid for any person, visitor or otherwise who may visit any EDA task site.

15. The EDA, through its operations and quality assurance / quality control (QA/QC) departments, has overall responsibility for all aspects of quality assurance and quality control standards according to the Eritrean Mine Action Standards. All individuals deployed or involved in the humanitarian mine clearing task are trained to be responsible for quality assurance. Quality checks are included at all levels of mine clearance tasks and are the foundation on which confidence in clearance is based. These quality checks are carried out by the team leader, the site supervisor, and by the EDA QA/QC department

through the sampling of 10 percent of the cleared area. Within each mine clearance agency operating in Eritrea, the team leader or supervisor has the overall responsibility for monitoring operation. To ensure that quality requirements are met, the EDA QA/QC department through a QA team supervisor carries out the final check, observing the work against each criterion described in both the monitoring checklists, which includes the generic site monitoring checklist and the manual site monitoring checklist prepared by the EDA.

16. After completion of clearance and explosive ordinance disposal (EOD) tasks, all appropriate records are to be completed, checked and signed by the operations supervisor and then a clearance certificate is prepared by EDA in cooperation with the local authorities for land release. Any non-conformity identified must be checked and verified before the final report is released to the local authorities. The clearance report includes the map of the area, map reference, cleared area, name of clearance organisation, name of entity which carried out the quality assurance, amongst other details.

17. Based on the data recorded by different surveys, it is apparent that much remains to be done for Eritrea to fulfil its obligations under Article 5. At present, the EDA does not have the necessary information to produce a detailed plan for completion of its Article 5 obligations but seeks to proceed to carry out additional surveys to precisely define the remaining challenge. Of the 411 communities identified as impacted a total of 265 are pending resurvey.

18. There are a number of circumstances why Eritrea has not been able to fulfil its obligations under Article 5: (a) Amount of contamination: The contamination problem in Eritrea covers a large surface area and extends throughout the country. The number of conflicts has left a great number of landmines and UXO. (b) Lack of funding: The assistance acquired since the start of the programme and currently available is insignificant compared to the remaining task of mine action. Financial support is necessary to conduct technical survey and to expand the number of mine clearance teams. Unless significant external support is acquired, it will take much longer to complete the national mine clearing programme than was planned initially. (c) Equipment shortage: Eritrea has a great amount of personnel trained in humanitarian demining. However, the available equipment does not allow for deployment of our full capacity. (d) There was a lack of efficient activities and coordination during the participation of several NGOs in the early stage of humanitarian demining operations.

19. Given the above, Eritrea is requesting a three year extension (until 1 February 2015) in order to conduct non-technical and technical survey to identify the exact remaining challenges and develop a concrete plan for fulfilment of Eritrea's Article 5 obligations.

20. Eritrea is drafting a national strategic plan 2011 to 2015 with the main objectives to be: (a) 50 percent area reduction by conducting effective technical and non technical surveys until 2014; (b) clearance of the remaining high and medium mine impacted areas until 2015; (c) continued clearance of land mines and UXO in the low impacted areas; and, continued national MRE activities to sensitise communities to reduce new casualties until full clearance is assured.

21. During the extension period Eritrea will conduct level two surveys in the LIS recorded impacted areas according to the priority assessments. According to current priorities, the demining teams are going to be deployed to the following regions and sub regions: Anseba region, sub regions Halhal, Keren, Haboro, Geleb, Hagaz and Kerkebet; and, Northern Red Sea region, sub regions Karora, Mahmimet, Afabet and Shieb. Non-technical survey, which is currently Eritrea's crucial task followed by technical survey activities, will be conducted in the following regions and sub regions: Anseba region, sub region Hagaz, Keren, Halhal, Geleb, Elaberid, Hamelmalo, Asmat and Aditekelezan;

Semienawi Keih Bahri region, sub regions of Karora, Afabet, Shieba, Foro and Massawa; Debubawi Keih Bahri region, sub regions of Maakel Debubawi Keih Bahri, Debub Debuawi Keih Bahri, Assab and Araata; and, Maakel Region, sub regions of Serejeka, Gala Nefhi and Berik.

22. The capacity that is proposed in the coming 5 year plan is as follows: (a) The existing two demining teams will increase to five teams, adding one team each year expanding to eight teams by the end of 2014; (b) The existing two EOD teams will increase to three teams by July 2011 and continue their task; (c) The existing two survey teams will increase to three survey teams by July 2011 and continue their task; (d) The existing two QA/QC teams will remain unchanged; (e) The existing ten MRE teams will remain unchanged; and, (f) Fifty (50) people will be added each year to the ranks of community volunteers to reach 300 by 2014.

23. In order to fulfil the goals of the extension on request, the human resources indicated will need to receive refresher training and be deployed by mid July 2011. The total budget being prepared strategic plan (2011-2015) is US\$ 8.5 million. Of this, the government is committed to cover the monthly salary payment for all field teams, which is around US\$ 5 million.

24. Over the course of the extension period Eritrea will keep the States Parties informed through its Article 7 transparency reports as well as through updates at Convention meetings and will submit a second request with a detailed plan on the implementation of Article 5 by 31 March 2014.

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