

## **Mine Action Programme of Ecuador Status and Challenges in Implementation**

**Thursday, 23 May 2019**

### **Introduction and participants**

On 23 May 2019, Ecuador and the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention with the support of the Implementation Support Unit invited state and civil society representatives to engage on Ecuador's needs and challenges in mine action and, in particular, its efforts to complete its mine clearance commitments by its deadline of 31 December 2022. Following opening remarks by the Ambassador of Ecuador to the United Nations in Geneva and a presentation by the Humanitarian Demining Centre of Ecuador participants engaged in an informal discussion about possible avenues of cooperation and assistance in support of Ecuador's efforts. Participants received a package including an invitation, agenda and Ecuador's presentation, (delivered version attached).

### Participants

**States:** Ireland, Chile, Sweden, (Chair, Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance), Norway (President of the Convention) Thailand, Turkey, and the United Kingdom (Members of the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance), Representatives of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit

**Organizations:** Mine Action Review, the European Union - EEAS, the Chilean Mine Action Centre.

### **Presentation**

Colonel Jorge Romel Vargas, Commander of the Engineering Battalion N. 68 and Head of Humanitarian Demining operations, presented on the status of Ecuador's mine action programme. Col. Vargas indicated that Ecuador is in its final phase of operations and that it will require international support to achieve its objective of completion by 31 December 2022.

Col. Vargas indicated that the work completed by Ecuador in the Provinces of Loja (2012), El Oro (2012), Pastaza (2015), Morona Santiago (2015), Zamora Chinchipe (ongoing) has resulted in the a total of 548,843.06 square meters addressed including 129,961.04 square meters cancelled, 20,790.29 square meters reduced and 398,091.73 square meters cleared identifying and destroying in the process 12,131 anti-personnel mines, 74 anti-tank mines and 34 items of unexploded ordnance. Ecuador indicated that this work was carried out employing manual, mechanical and mine detection dogs. Ecuador indicated that the operations carried out in these provinces supported the preservation of flora and fauna, agricultural activities, livestock activities, local tourism, fisheries (local and commercial) and the protection of different ethnic groups in the region.

Col. Vargas indicated that the remaining challenge is located in 60 objectives in 4 mined area in the Province of Zamora Chinchipe, on the border with Peru, measuring a total of 80,238 square meters containing an estimate of 3,260 anti-personnel mines. Col. Vargas indicated that 14 communities and 25 ethnic groups of the eastern region are living in border areas located in proximity to the mined areas. These mined areas limit the free transit of these communities, including to water sources, which are of great importance to the sustainability of these groups and their different livelihood activist including agriculture, hunting and fishing. The presentation also highlighted many of the economic implications of contamination.

Ecuador provided milestones for completion with 12 objectives measuring 23,383 square meters to be addressed in 2019, 12 objectives measuring 18,299 square meters to be addressed in 2020, 10 objectives measuring 20,688 square meters to be addressed in 2021 and 26 objectives measuring 17,868 square meters to be addressed in 2022. Ecuador indicated that it would need approximately US\$8,060,397.27 to complete operations by its 2022 deadline including US\$2,302,140.44 in 2019, US\$2,020,656.24 in 2020, US\$2,119,656.24 in 2021 and US\$1,617,944.35 in 2022. Ecuador further indicated that the main areas of support which are necessary including personal protection equipment, personal equipment, vehicles, and other support and that the costliest item of the programme is the necessary areal support given the location of the remaining minefields which can only be reached by air.

Ecuador indicated that in the past the OAS demining programme was active in Ecuador but that the support from the OAS had been finalized and that little international support has been provided since this time. Ecuador further indicated that it is in consultation with the OAS for their possible return to support the programme.

### **Discussion**

The representative of Chile indicated that it understood the challenges faced in Ecuador given the difficulty of access of some of Chile's own mined areas. Chile indicated that in the past during the period of 2003-2013, Chile together with Brazil had provided support through the Organization of American States mission of support to South America providing international monitors. Chile further indicated that although it is not able to commit financial resources, it would be happy to support Ecuador's efforts through providing capacity building support in areas such as geographical systems such as IMSMA and IMAS development to support the last phase of Ecuador's demining programme.

Norway thanked Ecuador for the valuable exchange of information congratulating Ecuador for its transparency and clear completion plan. Norway indicated that, as the presidency, Norway encourages countries to increase their donor support to affected states and that it was hopeful that Ecuador will be able to find international partners to support its efforts in achieving its 2022 deadline.

The EU thanked Ecuador for the valuable information and for having provided the invitation to the individualized approach more than a month in advance of the event which allowed for time to connect with the EU office in Quito. The EU has not been funding mine action assistance in Ecuador and it was understood that there was no direct intention to do so. However, the presentation and conversation will allow for the building of awareness to the fact that Ecuador has a mine problem. The EU representative indicated that the information from the individualized approach will be provided to the EU in Quito. Apart from treaty compliance it was clear from the presentation that there was an overall humanitarian goal, a supportive role for the reconciliation process and that the mined areas had an impact on indigenous people. The EU representative further highlighted the importance of liaising with the EU delegation in Quito given that decentralized way the EU works with the national delegations playing a very important role in identifying and allocating of funding and assistance.

The Chair mentioned that the attendance to the meeting was a disappointment and that it may be a reflection of the fact that Ecuador is not on the radar of the donor community and stressed the importance of the raising of awareness of Ecuador's situation.

### **Closing summary and follow up**

Ecuador thanked participants, thanking the Chair and the ISU for all the support and to Chile for expressing solidarity with Ecuador. He thanked the President for the dissemination of the

information concerning Ecuador's remain challenge with other donors. Ecuador further thanked the EU for the information provided and that this would be followed up on.

During closing summary, Ecuador thanked participants and indicate that it plans to hold a round table in Quito with partners to generate awareness of the status of Ecuador's demining programme.

**Questions about the Mine Action Program in Ecuador should be directed to:**

Permanent Mission of the Republic of Ecuador to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva; [onuginebra@cancilleria.gob.ec](mailto:onuginebra@cancilleria.gob.ec)