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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

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## Fourteenth Meeting

Geneva, 30 November-4 December 2015

### Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda

**Operation and status of the Convention. Presentation, reporting, discussion and decision with regard to: Conclusions and recommendations related to the mandate of the Committee on Article 5 Implementation**

## **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 Ethiopia**

1. Ethiopia was one of the first countries to sign the Convention in December 1997. Ethiopia ratified the Convention on 17 December 2004 and it entered into force for Ethiopia on 1 June 2005. At the time Ethiopia ratified the Convention, it was well known that Ethiopia was one of the 10 most heavily mine contaminated countries around the world. Ethiopia's mine contamination stems from a series of internal and international armed conflicts dating back to 1935, including the Italian invasion and subsequent east Africa Campaigns (1935-1941), the Ogaden war between Ethiopia and Somalia (1977-1978), internal conflict (1974-1991) and the Ethiopian-Eritrean war (1998-2000).

2. To address the mine contamination, the Ethiopian Demining Project was established in 1995 as a non-combatant unit of the Ministry of National Defence, distinct from the Army's Corps of Engineers. The international community, however, only became involved in 1998, when the UN carried out an assessment in the country but due to the conflict with Eritrea could not develop a programme. Following the peace agreement signed with Eritrea in June 2000, the Ethiopian Government invited the UN to provide further advice and assistance on assessing the possibility of developing a national mine action programme. Adopting the main recommendations identified in a UN evaluation, the Council of Ministers decree N°70/2001 established the Ethiopian Mine Action Office (EMAO) in February 2001 as an autonomous legal entity responsible for mine clearance and mine risk education accountable to the Prime Minister's office. Other tasks such as victim assistance and anti-personnel mine stockpile destruction fell under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Defence, respectively.

3. The first effort to establish a nationwide baseline data was the Ethiopian Landmine Impact Survey (ELIS), which was carried out in 2001-2004. The ELIS identified 1,916 suspected hazardous areas (SHA) measuring 2,443,116,287 square meters in 10 of the 11 regions of the country. 82 per cent of the impacted communities, however, were clustered



in the three regions of Afar, Somalia and Tigray in the northern and eastern parts of the country. The ELIS reported more than 1.9 million people in 1,492 communities affected by landmines. The ELIS also recorded 16,616 mine/ERW casualties with 9,341 resulting in death and 7,275 resulting in injury. Two-thirds of the victims were engaged in herding and farming activities when the accident occurred. The ELIS, it must be said, had some flaws; one main one was the lack of precision in identifying mined areas. The huge areas identified as contaminated were the size of the communities and not those of specific mined areas overestimating the amount of contamination and necessarily requiring additional costly survey efforts.

4. The presence of landmines and ERW hampered the access to land in many areas, causing food insecurity and representing an obstacle to the peace consolidation process in the border areas. One half of the impacted communities reported blocked access to pasture land. Over one-third of all impacted communities reported blockage to local roads and trails and rain-fed crop land. Nomadic pastoralists suffered from blocked access to water and forage. Transport corridors were the second most blocked resource. 38 per cent of the impacted communities reported blocked local road and trails as a more serious problem than main roads. The topography of the three most impacted regions is generally flat, thus permitting relatively easy avoidance of mined secondary and tertiary roads. The third blockage category in importance is rain fed cropland with 35 per cent of impacted communities reporting problems. Rain fed cropland is a main feature of Ethiopian agriculture and this blockage represented serious hardship in some communities.

5. Since 2002, the EMAO, with the support of a number of donors and Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) has carried out efforts to confirm the results of the ELIS and carry out mine clearance throughout the country. During the period of 2002-2012 a total of 59,629,764 square meters were cleared and about 1,190,317,900 square meters previously suspected hazardous areas were technically verified and released for the community use. During the clearance 9,260 anti-personnel mines were found and destroyed. In its efforts, of the 1,916 SHA identified by the ELIS, 1,602 SHAs and 58 SHAs newly found by advanced technical survey teams were cleared and freed by land release techniques.

6. These efforts have been carried out through the employment of National Mine Action Standards (NMAS) and Standard Operating Procedures which, with the support of NPA, have been updated in accordance with amendments to International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). Operations have also been carried out employing overall quality management including quality assurance and quality control efforts to ensure that operations are in accordance with NMAS and IMAS.

7. Mine clearance operations in Ethiopia have had a number of qualitative benefits with over two million people having benefited from these actions. Benefits of mine clearance activities over the years have included the resettlement of people displaced by the conflict, infrastructure reconstruction and repair, release of land for productive use increasing food security and agricultural development, contribution to peace and security of previously conflict affected regions, amongst others.

8. Without prejudice to the above major achievements, mine action was faced with some difficulty in the course of accomplishing its obligation. Although it has completed most of its operations, the final efforts have been made difficult due to the following circumstances: (a) insecurity: some of the suspected and known mined areas located in border and remote areas, typically in the Somali region, are due to insecurity inaccessible to a civilian humanitarian agency like EMAO; (b) accessibility: mined areas are located in naturally unfriendly remote areas characterized by harsh climate, absence of basic social services for the supply of basic needs (including shelter, water, medical, infrastructure etc.); (c) limited operations: continuous redeployment of demining teams in scattered minefield areas and absence of fund; (d) new hazards found: as the surveys were carried out and the

ELIS which was completed in 2004 came to a conclusion, new hazards were found which were added to the IMSMA data base; (e) lack of information: there is no precise knowledge about the number and locations of all areas contaminated by mines; (f) climatic factor: three months out of the year mine action more or less comes to delay because of heavy rain in most parts of Ethiopia. Lack of suitable roads and other infrastructure make it impossible for the teams to carry their operation and reach hazardous areas during the rainy season.

9. As the matter of this there are 314 SHA equal to 1,193,168,623 square meters that remain to be surveyed, cleared and released in Afar, Benshangul, Gambela, Oromia, Tigray and Somalia regions. Only 0.5 per cent of these areas are expected to be confirmed as mined areas requiring clearance. The total amount of the remaining suspected hazardous areas to be released does not including the Ethio-Eritrean confrontation border. When the ELIS was conducted the border has been under the control of UNMEE so no one has entered the area to survey. Because the delineation is not marked on the land between the two countries the border area is not safe to enter even now.

10. In 2012 the Ethiopian Government dissolved the EMAO by decree and the remaining task was placed under the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence combat engineers division for the following key reasons: (a) the remaining confirmed areas will be more easily reachable to Ministry of National Defence than to the civilian Mine Action Programme; (b) with demining resources and donations coming shorter and shorter, it is important that the landmine clearance is carried out by the Ministry of National Defence, as Defence is in a better position for budgeting compared to the Mine Action Programme; (c) the built capacity will be in better use by the Ministry of National Defence, as Ethiopian forces are widely involved in peace keeping operations in many countries.

11. Since the closure of the EMAO, the Ministry of Defence combat engineers division has been moving forward to implement its plan to address the remaining suspected and confirmed hazardous areas. Before deploying clearance teams to those areas, the division is strongly working on capacity building by developing mine action standards through combat engineer teams, parallel to ERW clearance/spot task. The aim of this preparation and capacity building is to conduct training and clearance activities with minimal costs that can be covered by the combat engineers own budgets.

12. In order to implement the plan, Ethiopia does face a number of challenges including the following: (a) to complete the work of the Demining Training Center left unfinished by Ex-EMAO, Ethiopia will require a significant amount of capacity building. For this, Ethiopia's Training Center, which is close to the capital city of Addis Ababa, has the basic establishment for the purpose of training deminers to a high standard. Unfortunately, at the time being, and in accordance with Ethiopia's plan, the Training Center is not completed due to the fact that the combat engineers division has a lack of funds to complete the Training Center buildings. Nonetheless, the combat engineers division has begun to facilitate the training with its limited budget. Unfortunately, Financial support is requires. (b) To specialize and certify teams of RRT and EODs through advance training: in Ethiopia's case most clearance activities are conducted on mine fields, and the deminers are getting an experience throughout their course of work. However, the deminers are less experienced in planning and implementing assets to address other ERW. While the division has taken some steps on training units regarding this task, it needs international support and technical advisors. (c) To fully equip all the teams of RRT and EODs: The Rapid Response Teams are equipped with old demining equipment which reaches its shelf life in the coming New Year. The Division will aim to replace this equipment in time to meet the milestones of the plan. However, the budget is limited to replace the equipment and purchase spares.

13. Unfortunately, over the course of its initial 10 years since entry into force of the Convention, Ethiopia has not been in a position to fulfil its obligations under Article 5.

With the responsibility of meeting Ethiopia's obligations under the Convention lying within the Ministry of Defence, it has begun to implement the plan to meet its objectives. The combat engineers Mine Action Office planned to reach areas which EMAO has not reached; they are now accessible to demine and accomplish clearance activities in areas remaining after the closure of the EMAO. The Work Plan for the five years extension period will include the remaining mine suspected areas in the six regions Afar, Somali, Oromia, Gambela, Tigray and Benshangul. The remaining mine suspected areas in those regions National Defence Force Combat Engineering Main Department plans to run advanced technical survey by TS/RRT teams to confirm exact mined area and to release the suspected hazardous areas. From 1 December 2015 until the end of May 2020 four demining companies and four Rapid Response Teams will start the clearance and surveying of the contaminated regions. The following yearly milestones are expected:

#### **2015**

- Demining course training and establishment of RRT and EOD teams;
- Development and updating of mine action standards and mine clearance and land release standard operating procedures and integration within the updated IMAS;
- Deployment of four demining companies to the regions of Somali, Tigray and Oromia;
- Deployment of four teams of TS/RRT teams to Afar, Gambela and Benshangulu;
- Initiation of revisit to all registered areas in December 2015 to update current information in the database (to be completed by the end of 2017);
- Address approximately a total of 452,890 square meters through non-technical survey and technical survey and a total of 28,098,439 square meter through clearance.

#### **2016**

- Continue operations by the eight teams throughout the region;
- Deployment of four TS/RRT teams to Afar, Gambela, Oromia, Benshangul and Somali to conclude survey to more precisely define areas for clearance;
- Address approximately a total of 515,171,855 square meters through non-technical and technical survey and a total of 4,881,052 square meters through clearance.

#### **2017**

- Continue working with the four demining companies in Somali and one TS/RRT team to clear Gambela while the rest of TS/RRT teams deploy to conclude survey in Somali;
- Address a total of 647,810,293 square meters through non-technical and technical survey and a total of 4,801,597 square meters through clearance;
- Submit by April 2017 an updated work plan to the States Parties based on a clear picture of the remaining contaminated areas.

#### **2018-2020**

- Clearance will continue in surveyed areas mainly in Somali Region.

14. In order to complete the work left unfinished by EMAO, Ethiopia is requesting an extension totalling five years from 1 June 2015 until 1 June 2020 to accomplish and to fulfil

its Article 5 obligations. This time frame is necessary for Ethiopia to: solicit and acquire the support of international advisors; provide training and capacity building to demining teams, rapid response teams and EOD teams; fully equip Rapid Response Teams and EOD teams; complete the work of the Demining Training Centre left unfinished by Ex-EMAO; and, to complete the survey and clearance of the remaining mined areas.

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