

Press Release



Landmine treaty lessons could benefit UXO strategy in the Pacific

Prince Mired of Jordan calls for universal acceptance of the Convention in the region

Koror, Palau 26 October 2012 – A three-day regional meeting on the implementation of the Pacific Islands Forum Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) Strategy has successfully concluded in Palau with a renewed commitment to coordinate efforts to eliminate the dangers of Second World War explosive hazards. The meeting focused heavily on how the lessons learned from the implementation of the landmark Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, or Ottawa Convention, could apply to dealing with the Pacific's UXO challenges.

The meeting highlighted the leading example of the Republic of Palau in using its membership in the Convention to address the problems caused by UXO. "I wish to whole-heartedly commend the Republic of Palau for its leadership on this issue in the Pacific," said His Royal Highness Prince Mired Raad Al Hussein of Jordan, who serves as a Special Envoy for the Convention. "I would very much like to praise Palau for its great efforts in garnering national ownership and to commend the very active role played by Palau's President, Minister of State and other leaders in establishing a national coordination body and proceeding to systematically destroy unexploded ordnance."

In opening the meeting, the President of the Republic of Palau, Johnson Toribiong, highlighted that he had raised the UXO issue in the Pacific at the United Nations General Assembly in September. "As a result of fierce battles fought over our islands during the Second World War, explosives rained down on our lands," said President Toribiong. "Some of those explosives still lie there and pose an extreme danger to the lives and limbs of our people. We appeal to the conscience of the world, especially those responsible, to remove this danger from our midst."

In 2011, Pacific Islands Forum leaders formally welcomed the development of a regional UXO strategy. This strategy serves as a framework to coordinate international and regional activities and resources to support the development of national UXO policies and action plans. The meeting focused on implementing this strategy.

Seven of the eight Member States of the Pacific Islands Forum affected by unexploded ordnance took part in the regional meeting: the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Other Member States participating in the meeting included Australia, the Cook Islands, Samoa and Tonga. The Meeting was sponsored by Australia and New Zealand.

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"The Convention's States Parties have formally acknowledged that the lessons derived from fulfilling mine clearance obligations are applicable in addressing challenges associated with other explosive remnants of war," said the Director of the Convention's Implementation Support Unit, Kerry Brinkert. "They have noted that in many instances, the organisational structures, the capacities that have been built and the standards that have been established largely as a result of the need to

Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit

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implement the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention can also be applied to address weapons contamination more broadly.”

The regional meeting also served as an important platform to call for universal acceptance of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. “The Convention is nearly universalized in the Pacific,” said His Royal Highness Prince Mired, noting that only three Member States have not yet acceded the Convention. “I call upon the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Kingdom of Tonga to take the steps already taken by the other 13 Member States of the Pacific Islands Forum by joining the Convention.”

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

The Convention was adopted in Oslo in 1997 and opened for signature in Ottawa the same year. It entered into force on 1 March 1999.

To date 160 States are party to the Convention, 155 of them no longer hold stocks of anti-personnel mines. Over 44.5 million stockpiled mines have been destroyed by the States Parties. Of the 50 States that at one time manufactured anti-personnel mines, 34 are now bound by the Convention’s ban on production. Most other States have put in place moratoria on production and / or transfers of mines.

Demining has resulted in millions of square metres of once dangerous land being released for normal human activity.

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