

**Standing Committee on General Status and Operation of the Convention
Geneva, 21 and 25 June 2010**

Intervention on behalf of the UN Mine Action Team

Thank you Mister/Madam Co-Chair¹,

I deliver the following statement on behalf of the United Nations Mine Action Team (UNMAT), comprising the 14 United Nations Departments, Agencies, Funds, and Programmes² involved in mine action.

This statement reflects United Nations activities and initiatives of relevance to the Standing Committee on General Status and Operation of the Convention since the Second Review Conference (29 November – 3 December 2009).

Overview of the General Status of Universalization

Efforts to promote the universalization of the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention continue and remain a priority for the United Nations. The United Nations considers universalization as an issue of both ensuring that all states sign on to the Convention, and that states that have signed fully comply with all obligations. We are encouraged by the moves of some states, including the Observers to the Cartagena Summit in considering joining the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

During this reporting period, the United Nations, including its highest level, has taken a number of opportunities to call for the universal adherence to the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention. A video message from the Secretary-General was delivered to the Second Review Conference on 29 November 2009; and on the occasion of the annual International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action on the 4th of April he highlighted that “Mine action also means adherence to the relevant legal instruments, including the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention (...).”

Also, regarding the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, many countries hosted special events. These events provided a platform for the promotion of mine action and the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention, underlining the humanitarian impact caused by the use of landmines and other explosive remnants of war and encouraging governments to integrate mine

¹ Co-Chairs : Ecuador and Slovenia

² UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS), UN Office of Disarmament Affairs (ODA), UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women (OSAGI), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO) and World Bank.

action into development planning. The United Nations assisted a number of mine action programmes in holding some of these special events. For example, in Afghanistan a competition was held whereby schoolchildren country-wide designed posters depicting their experiences of living with landmines and explosive remnants of war, and of mine risk education. The winning posters have been developed into postcards, murals and materials that can be further used to enhance the visibility and message of mine action.

In New York, the main event was a photographic exhibition by a renowned photographer, opened by the Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The photos depicted numerous aspects related to cluster munitions and mine action several mine affected countries around the world.

In this regard, the United Nations would like to highlight the impending entry into force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions on the 1st of August 2010, signifying the ongoing strengthening of the international normative framework to enhance human security. The Convention constitutes a major step forward in strengthening international humanitarian law guided by the strong humanitarian imperative to protect civilians and promote our common human rights and the development potential of affected communities. The broad participation in the meeting in Santiago, Chile this month is encouraging, and raises optimism that more states will ratify the convention before it enters into force.

The United Nations recognizes the right of all humans to live free from both fear and want, and that mine action needs to be approached under this overall concept of human security.

The UN Mine Action Team recognizes the fact that there are still a number of mine-affected countries that have not yet adhered to the Mine Ban Convention. We will continue to pursue, and support with our advocacy efforts, these accession efforts - particularly, through in-country capacities, of those currently receiving UN support in mine action. Creative solutions need to be sought.

For example, although Somaliland is not recognized as an independent state, and therefore cannot accede to the Mine Ban Convention, new legislation in Somaliland approved on May 26th 2009, mirrors the Mine Ban Convention. The legislation contains obligations for stockpile reduction, mine clearance and victim assistance. It also establishes sanctions for non-compliance and contains provisions for monitoring implementation. In 2010, the Somaliland Mine Action Centre will enhance awareness and engagement by implementing the legislation through workshops in every region of Somaliland. We acknowledge the role of Geneva Call in encouraging different actors in Somalia to adhere to the mine ban.

On this matter, we also want to congratulate His Royal Highness, Prince Mired of Jordan, for his appointment as Special Envoy of the Presidency. UNMAT wishes to express its readiness to continue supporting Prince Mired's efforts.

Article 7: Transparency and the exchange of information

Mister/Madam Co-Chair,

We take this opportunity to confirm once again the readiness of the United Nations to assist States Parties in the preparation of their annual Article 7 reports. During this period, UNDP and UNMAS have provided this assistance to a number of States Parties currently receiving support from the United Nations in mine action.

Article 9: The development and adoption of legislative, administrative and other measures.

UNMAS, UNDP and UNICEF have assisted some States Parties currently receiving mine action support from the UN in the preparation of national legislation on mine action.

For example, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is getting nearer to signing legislation in support of the Mine Ban Convention. Under the terms of the legislation, a national authority will be formally established, staffed by officials from the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense and Security. At the National Mine Action Centre level, a focal point is already working with the UN Mine Action Centre on a daily basis.

Assistance and Cooperation

Assistance and cooperation in mine action provided by the United Nations during the reporting period have benefited the following 23 States Parties during the reporting period: Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Chad, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Mauritania, Mozambique, Senegal, Sudan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uganda, Yemen, and Zambia. In addition, six countries non-States Parties to the APMBC; Azerbaijan, Egypt, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Somalia, Sri Lanka have received assistance in mine action. Two territories – Western Sahara and the Occupied Palestinian Territories – also received mine action support from the United Nations.

A large part of our resource mobilization efforts, and in consistency with the relevant Action points in the Cartagena Action Plan, is targeted at supporting States to fulfill their obligations to the Convention.

The *2010 Portfolio of Mine Action Projects* coordinated by the UN Mine Action Team, requested US\$ 589 million addressing close to 280 mine action initiatives by 95 appealing agencies in 27 countries and territories.

In many affected States Parties, the UN continues to advise on mainstreaming mine action into multi-sectoral planning, broader development and reconstruction work and associated budgeting processes to ensure the highest socio-economic impact of mine action activities. This is made in accordance with Actions 14, 50 and others of the Cartagena Action Plan. The UN believes that the need to focus on mine action in conjunction with poverty reduction and livelihood initiatives is imperative. In this regard, mine action has a facilitative role and development potential, and thus making an important contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Given that the primary responsibility for mine action rests with the affected states, the United Nations underscores that national ownership and leadership are key to all these efforts in ensuring greater impact in both the short and long term. Mine action needs to be coordinated under national leadership and oversight, and closely integrated into national development plans and strategies. The provision of national resources is also a key indicator of the priority afforded to mine action and of the political will of national authorities, and sends an important message to donors.

Evidence shows that, too often, the challenges posed by landmines and other explosive remnants of war are still not reflected in overarching development assistance instruments such as the UN Development Assistance or the PRSP. Where relevant in the country context it will be important to incorporate mine action into these frameworks to guide development cooperation and assistance and contribute to general budget support. Several UNDAF are up for review in 2010 and 2011, and the United Nations, with UNDP in particular, will be approaching affected states and donors to strongly encourage, once again, the integration of mine action as part of the overall development agenda.

There is a need to build sustainable national capacity, which promotes focused action and good governance and establishes a crucial space for government, civil society and communities to discuss issues of mine contamination and its impact on local populations. To match this sustainable commitment at the national level, there is a need for predictable and sustained donor support. This goal is within sight but this should not lessen or halt efforts towards ensuring a truly mine free world.

The UNDP "Completion Initiative" offers a framework of innovative partnerships to affected States Parties, which could contribute to enhance and accelerate mine action activities towards the completion of Article 5 obligations. This initiative also affords opportunities for donor states, as well as national authorities, United Nations and implementing partners to collaborate closely.

Overall, compliance in higher numbers can only contribute positively to the continued and increased momentum and political dimensions of the Mine Ban Treaty.

South-South cooperation and the sharing of experiences and knowledge between affected states are also much in need. This is a way through which States Parties with less financial resources could make a valuable contribution to the implementation of Article 6, in addition to international funding provided by more traditional donors. States Parties interested in South-South cooperation in mine action could get in touch with UNDP, who has created a special programme called Mine Action Exchange (MAX).

Also, while landmines have not been used in any major conflict for many years, other kinds of explosive ordnance, including cluster munitions, have been used, leaving significant numbers of ERW in the ground. Therefore, it is highly needed that national and international actors are prepared for the rapid deployment of mine action capabilities, including emergency clearance and MRE, to address the threats posed by the use of these explosive weapons at the earliest possible stage.

UNMAT has started the process towards the formulation of the new UN Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy. Ongoing consultations with stakeholders aim to ensure that the new strategy is properly aligned with and supportive of the efforts undertaken on the ground and is able to provide overall guidance for UN assistance in mine action.

States Parties that wish to request international cooperation and assistance through the United Nations system could communicate their request to either the Senior United Nations Official in the country or to UNMAS through their Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York (or eventually Geneva).

The United Nations notes with satisfaction the growing role played by affected countries in international fora and the leadership shown by a number of affected states in pushing forward the international humanitarian law agenda. This increased role is a vivid example of the enhanced capacity of national authorities and the priority afforded to the issue of mine action by affected states.

Concluding Remarks

The United Nations Mine Action Team considers that the success of the Mine Ban Treaty in combating the suffering caused by landmines presents us with a model to tackle other threats, such as cluster munitions.

The Treaty continues to provide an inspiration for mine action and human security across the globe.

Thank you.