

The speech of the Director of Tajikistan Mine Action Centre in the 15th Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, Santiago, Chile 2016

Dear Madam President, ladies and Gentlemen!

First of all, using the opportunity, I would like to thank the Government of the Republic of Chile for warm hospitality. Also, I would like to thank the ISU, GICHD and UN for their contribution in organizing this meeting.

This is a great moment to update you on mine action related activities in Tajikistan. As you may know 93% of Tajikistan's territory is mountainous and only 7% is land that can be used for agriculture and other development related activities. The geographic condition makes the people to depend on these lands.

The level of mine contamination area in Tajikistan still remains relatively high, mainly in Tajik-Afghan Border. The landmines and explosive remnants of war including cluster munition remnants are still affecting the lives of the people of Tajikistan. Mines and ERW continue to create problems both in social and economic aspects. The Government of Tajikistan considers mine/ERW related problems one of the highest priorities.

Since 2004 until the end of November 2016, more than 17 km² of the land has been released through joint NTS/TS interventions, through mine clearance and TS identifying and destroying 57,300 AP mines, 22 AT mines, 11,200 ERW, 750 cluster sub munitions, 42 kg of explosive charges, and 91,200 small arms cartridges. In total, 234 hazardous areas were released and handed over to the local authorities for safe use.

As of November 2016, 112 confirmed hazard areas (CHA) with an approximate total size of 6.84 km² and 79 unsurveyed minefield records with an approximate total size of 2.8 km² which contain 57,000 recorded AP mines remain to be addressed.

Despite the achievement there are still some challenges that may affect smooth implementation of the Article 5 completion plan:

First of all, Security situation in Tajik-Afghan border impeded continuation of land release activities in the border areas. Only in certain areas of TAB land release activities are conducted.

Difficult areas: Tajikistan is highly mountainous country; many of HAs are located in hard to reach areas.

Operational season: Generally, annually operations starting in early May and suspending in end of October (only 6 month operational season);

Weather: Extreme weather conditions are another challenge to clearance operations. In Central region, many HAs are accessible only 3-4 months a year (i.e. only during summer period).

Accessibility of areas for machines and dogs: All areas accessible for machines and dogs are completed;

Required only manual demining operations: The speed of which is slow and productivity is less;

Inaccessible CHA: Confirmed hazardous area that is impossible to access by land release teams due to relief, small river islands, mudflows and other constraints including security.

Non-executable tasks: A confirmed hazardous area in which clearance is impossible to execute under current working conditions. There are 23 areas in TAB covering app. 1,3 km² are not accessible for further clearance operations due to relief, sandy soil, islands, flows, mines are located too deep (60 - 70 cm), no access road and other constraints.

Financing: Insufficient funds for the programme have presented operational challenges.

Besides the land release operations, Tajikistan made good progress in the following areas:

The National Humanitarian Mine Action Law was developed and endorsed by the Government of Tajikistan in August 2016. The law had been introduced with national and international partners involved in humanitarian mine action related activities in Tajikistan.

In addition to the humanitarian mine action law, Tajikistan Mine Action Programme has developed the National Mine Action Strategy (2016-2020) and updated the NMAS (standards) which are agreed with all the stakeholder and submitted for the signature to the Government of Tajikistan.

There is still a lot of work to do for Tajikistan to fulfill its obligations. Tajikistan still needs international assistance in mine action program implementation in the coming future and invites the world community to continue its precious assistance for this important issue. The national mine action law and strategy will help to conduct land release activities accordingly.

On behalf of the Republic of Tajikistan, I would like to thank all our donors (US DOS, Switzerland UNDP, OSCE, Norway and Japan) for their great contribution to the Tajikistan Mine Action Programme. Also we present our highest gratitude and appreciation to the international agencies that have been involved in implementation of mine action program in Tajikistan. **Thank you for your attention!**