

Lebanon

Universalisation

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to congratulate the presidency of the Seventeenth Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, her Excellency Suraya Dalil, and thank her for the organization of this event and for hosting us in Geneva.

Lebanon continues to clear mine contamination with the same spirit of adhering to the noble causes of the mine ban treaty. Lebanon has never produced or exported anti-personal mines, and doesn't use, stockpile or transport any of those. Today we are happy to announce that the GoL is studying the possibility of acceding to the Ottawa treaty, and great steps have been taken towards that.

Contamination in Lebanon dates back to prior 1975, and it has affected the majority of the country. After the end of civil war in 1990, the LAF initiated clearance of previous demarcation lines. In 2003, a landmine Impact Survey was conducted to identify the affected communities. In addition, the Israeli aggressions of 2006 increased the percentage of contaminated land especially with cluster munitions and UXOs. The operation "Fajer el Jouroud" executed in 2017, which ended the presence of terrorist groups in the north east region of Lebanon, also resulted with an extra 133 km<sup>2</sup> of contaminated land with a new type of threat: IEDs.

The government of Lebanon continuously contributes to mine action, through staff salaries and equipment support estimated at 9 Million USD per year. In addition, the GoL declared a contribution of 33 Million USD for cluster munitions over a period of 5 years. However, this contribution does not meet the needs of Lebanon to become free of mines.

The mine contamination in Lebanon can be divided into 2 main groups. The first one is the "Blue Line" Area, a continuous line of patterned minefields, approximately 120 km long, along the southern border. The second group is all other mine field. The Blue Line constitute approximately 35% of the total mine fields, and represents direct and close risk to the population because of its proximity to villages and since it covers a lot of agricultural land. Till date, Lebanon has cleared 64 % of the minefields, with a total of about 100,000 mines.

The Syrian refugees' camps continue to represent a major challenge. A lot of these camps are in the near proximity of contaminated lands. The huge number of refugees and their lack of Risk Education, results in increased number of victims. In 2018, 25% of total victims are Syrian Refugees.

Despite common and special challenges, LMAC works toward achieving the ultimate goal of a "Lebanon free of the impact of mines and ERW". Based on quality management principles, and in coordination with our implementing partners, we continuously improve our methodologies and search for new technologies. The National Mine Action Standards has been fully revised and updated in 2018. An increased reliance on NTS and TS is now core to our operations.

In terms of MRE, LMAC is highly active in organizing activities to disseminate knowledge and raise awareness among population. The plan is to cover the entire country, reaching schools and visiting villages in every region, so that the risk is clearly understood and safety is promoted.

Mine victim assistance is always a main pillar in mine action. LMAC continues to provide MVA through the national steering committee on victim assistance. The total number of victims in 2018 was 20, among those 4 were killed, and 13 out of 20 were in the north east region. LMAC works hard to secure funds for the victims' assistance, not only to organize

workshops and interactive sessions on mental health but also to provide the needed prosthetic and orthotic services and supporting the execution of income generating projects.

In this context, LMAC will be publishing soon a socio-economic study that would be beneficial for every organization working in Mine Action. The study concludes that every dollar invested in humanitarian mine action generates 4.91 dollar. A quite remarkable humanitarian return on investment.

As for donor support coordination, based on the initiative of the Norwegian Embassy, LMAC established a mine action forum that generates for mine action support customized to Lebanon. As such this forum resulted in exceptional achievements not only in terms of funding but also in intensifying coordination, ensuring complementarity and addressing field technical issues.

Last but not least, LMAC acknowledge a major role in disseminating experience to other countries to support the global scope of humanitarian MA. Through the Arab Regional Cooperation Program and the Regional School for Humanitarian Demining in Lebanon, LMAC plays a central role in the region.

In conclusion, LMAC strives to implement an integrated approach enhancing efficiency while conforming to standards, addressing the various needs of victims and widening MRE scope, assessing the socio-economic impact, coordinating support and most importantly transmitting the knowledge and experience. We welcome any initiative for cooperation to make the world free of mines.