

Last steps towards a mine-free Democratic Republic of the Congo
Overview of remaining challenges and needs
12 November 2020

I. Introduction and participants

On 12 November 2020, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, with the support of the Implementation Support Unit, invited state and civil society representatives to engage in an open and frank discussion regarding the Democratic Republic of the Congo's needs and challenges in implementing its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention, focused in particular on the Democratic Republic of the Congo's current extension request and implementation efforts to complete its mine clearance commitments by 2022.

Participants received a package including an invitation and an agenda, together with the Democratic Republic of the Congo's presentation, (delivered version attached). These documents will be made available on the Democratic Republic of the Congo's country page of the Convention website¹.

Due to the COVID-19 situation, the meeting was held online.

II. Participation

States: France, Korea, Republic of, Japan, Spain and the United States of America and the members of the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance: Colombia, Germany and the United Kingdom.

Organisations: AFRILAM, DCA, European Union, GICHD, ICBL, MAG, UNICEF and UNMAS.

III. Welcome remarks

Following a welcome and overview of the individualised approach by the United Kingdom, Chair of the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance, **Mr. Serge Ndaie Musenge, First Counsellor and Chargé d'affaires a.i. at the Permanent Mission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations in Geneva**, shared opening remarks.

Mr. Ndaie Musenge briefly summarised the work carried out by the Democratic Republic of the Congo to fulfil its obligations under the Convention and indicated that his country is close to the final objective after almost 18 years of implementation. Mr Ndaie Musenge thanked the donors which supported the Democratic Republic of the Congo and highlighted that financial resources had been one of the many challenges which had prevented the Democratic Republic of the Congo from completing within its deadline. Mr. Ndaie Musenge considers the individualised approach as an important means for the Democratic Republic of the Congo to present to its partners the real status of Article 5 implementation and to request support in order to reach the finish line.

IV. Overview of the DRC's remaining challenges and needs

Maître Sudi Alimasi Kimputu, Director of the Centre Congolais de Lutte Antimines (CCLAM) provided a presentation on the status and progress of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's mine action programme.

¹ <https://www.apminebanconvention.org/states-parties-to-the-convention/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>

Maître Sudi reminded participants that following its Article 5 original deadline on 1 November 2012, the Democratic Republic of the Congo was granted two extensions and submitted a third one until 1 July 2022 to be considered by the Eighteenth Meeting of the States Parties.

Maître Sudi indicated that 132 dangerous areas were discovered after the national mine contamination survey (ENCM), including 130 dangerous areas and 42 new areas. To this day, 139 dangerous areas have been cleared and 33 areas in 9 provinces totaling 128,841.7 square metres remain to be cleared. Surveys still need to be conducted in Aru territory (Ituri province) and Dungu territory (Haut-Uele province).

The difficulties faced by the programme include a decrease in funding, a reduction of the number of operators, the immensity and complexity of the country, epidemics and pandemics and insecurity and recurrence of armed conflicts amongst others.

Maître Sudi indicated that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is requesting an 18-month extension to carry out the remaining work, until 1 July 2022.

Support is requested for the completion of Article 5, to address residual contamination as well as improvised explosive devices and to reinforce the operational capacity of actors, including EOD experts nationwide to destroy stockpiled anti-personnel mines that continue to be found. In addition, financial support and training for MRE organisations is required, direct financial support to victims and support to the national programme for the identification of victims and their needs.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo needs training and equipment and 3,880, 695.65 USD. Of the total amount required, the government of the DRC is contributing 564,221 USD, leaving 3,316,474.65 USD to be mobilised. 1,868,204.65 USD are required for the clearance of the remaining 33 areas, 568,270 USD for survey and 880,000 USD for mine risk education.

V. Summary of interventions and discussions

Danish Church Aid (DCA) is one of the main partners of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in mine action activities and is currently working in three provinces, Maniema, North Kivu and Ituri. DCA took the floor to share its perspectives and work in the DRC indicating that in the period between October 2019 and September 2020, 93,588 square metres of land were released, enabling access to agricultural land and waterpoints as well as enabling populations to move back to their communities.

DCA indicated that insecurity (especially in Ituri and North Kivu provinces) has impacted the deployment of demining teams, creating delays in meeting targets. Logistical difficulties, in particular road conditions, have slowed down the movement of teams from one area to another. Natural phenomena, such as dense forest grown after mined areas were abandoned, the presence of wild animals and the swampy nature of some areas in the rainy season have created additional delays.

DCA highlighted that it would be important that the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues accrediting organisations working in support of the mine action programme so that support could continue to be provided all the way to completion. DCA also expressed the wish that institutional donors continue funding work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and thanked in particular the United States for their support.

As for victim assistance-related work, it has been challenging to find and document the victims, often located in conflict areas, and to obtain funds.

Maître Sudi thanked DCA for their presentation and for their work. He indicated that the accreditation process was ongoing and ensured that it would continue without difficulty.

AFRILAM could not deliver their presentation due to technical difficulties and provided a contribution in written form (see attachment).

ICBL took the floor to congratulate the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the event and its efforts to work with partners to reach completion. The ICBL noted that although the 18-month extension is regrettable, it is nonetheless reasonable in view of the task at hand. The ICBL encouraged the Democratic Republic of the Congo to submit annual transparency reports detailing progress, challenges and needs so as to facilitate cooperation with partners. The ICBL also highlighted the national financial commitment to the activities of the CCLAM and encouraged an increased allocation of national funds to operations to demonstrate national ownership in accordance with Action # 42 of the Oslo Action Plan. The ICBL encouraged all donors to work in collaboration with Democratic Republic of the Congo to reach its goals.

The **GICHD** took the floor to express its support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in its efforts for mine clearance. The GICHD highlighted its work with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and noted the importance of adequate strategic planning, the implementation of national mine action standards, and strategic planning towards completion. The GICHD emphasised the importance of countries having clear and realistic road maps with clear objectives. The GICHD also noted that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is on track with its current 2018-2019 strategy that includes an operational action plan. The GICHD mentioned it is ready to provide capacity building support, including in data management and reporting, and is currently supporting UNMAS DRC in information management in this regard. The GICHD mentioned that as part of its work with francophone countries, it has produced model documentation in French, including the recently updated international mine action standards and a new guide on improvised explosive devices expected to be published early 2021.

UNMAS DRC took the floor mentioning its support of the Democratic Republic of the Congo explosive ordnance disposal activities, as part of the broader United Nations Mission for the Stabilization of the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO). In 2019 and early 2020, this work received the financial support of Korea international cooperation agency to conduct explosive ordnance risk education and demining activities in eastern DRC. UNMAS urged all donors and mine action organisations to do all they can to support the clearance of landmines in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and also encouraged the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to allocate the necessary resources to the CCLAM to continue its mine clearance efforts and to ensure that the national security and defence forces can be trained, equipped and authorised to address residual contamination.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo thanked the organisations which took the floor and responded to comments by indicating that the CCLAM is advocating internally with the Government on receiving the necessary support but indicated that the Government is currently faced with many competing humanitarian priorities resulting in a lack of resources for mine action activities. The Democratic Republic of the Congo thanked in particular the GICHD for their strong partnership and their offer of further support and UNMAS DRC for understanding the current difficulties faced by the country and the mine action programme.

The **United States Department of State** (US-DOS) took the floor to encourage donors to join the United States in providing support to humanitarian mine action directly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The US-DOS is currently the only donor supporting Danish Church Aid, (DCA) and the current project funding for the clearance of remaining hazardous areas in Maniema, North Kivu and Ituri provinces is set to continue until September 2021. The US-DOS mentioned that it is also supporting victim assistance activities in the Lake Kivu region. The US-DOS encouraged the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to consider GICHD's offer of support for information management expressing concern about the reported deployment of clearance

operators to areas with no contamination. The US-DOS also asked how the Government plans to sustain a national capacity to respond to clearance tasks identified after completion.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo thanked the United States for their continued support and responded to the US-DOS by indicating that currently, more than 400 members of the national police and the armed forces have been trained in mine clearance. These personnel have so far been put at the disposal of the demining organisations and it is envisaged in accordance with the strategic plan that they could be deployed to address residual contamination.

The US-DOS further mentioned that it will share information on its current projects in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for all participants in order to encourage other donors to provide support.

Korea took the floor to thank the Democratic Republic of the Congo for their presentation and mentioned that while not a State Party to the Convention, it tries to contribute to the international community's effort to reduce and mitigate the sufferings caused by anti-personnel mines. Korea thanked UNMAS for mentioning its funding support and noted that a request for a second round of funding is currently being assessed. Finally, Korea enquired about the linkages between UNMAS' new project and the situation highlighted by the CCLAM in their presentation.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo thanked the representative of Korea for their support.

UNMAS responded that the second funding proposal is based on the Democratic Republic of the Congo's Article 5 request for extension of its mine clearance deadline. UNMAS mentioned that the proposal will also seek to address all explosive remnants of war. UNMAS also mentioned that the proposal seeks to support the building of national demining capacity, through training staff from local NGOs to carry out mine risk education, and demining operations, carry out explosive ordnance disposal and to maintain support to CCLAM in the coordination of the mine action programme.

VI. Closing remarks

In closing, **Mr. Serge Ndaie Musenge** thanked the Chair and the ISU for facilitating the meeting and the participants for their contributions. He also mentioned that the Democratic Republic of the Congo was well aware of the challenges it still has to face to be mine-free.

Mr. Sudi Alimasi Kimputu expressed his thanks to the Chair for his facilitation of the event and all the participants for their attendance. He thanked the United States and Korea for their engagement and expressed the hope that they can continue their support. Maître Sudi reaffirmed the commitment of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to work with donors and partners and all those willing to support.

The Chair thanked Maître Sudi for his engagement and expressed the hope that the Individualised Approach meeting will be helping the DRC to complete its work.

The Chair mentioned that a report of the meeting will be shared with all participants aiming to provide further impetus for engagement and follow-up on the discussion held at the meeting. The report will also be posted on the Democratic Republic of the Congo's country page on the Convention's website.

The Chair thanked all those who attended and encouraged participants to look at all areas in which they can support the efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

For further information or clarification on the Mine Action Programme in the Democratic Republic of the Congo please direct all queries to: Mr. Sudi Alimasi Kimputu, Director of the Centre Congolais de Lutte Antimines (CCLAM)