



**The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention  
Nineteenth Meeting of the States Parties (19MSP)  
15-19 November, The Hague**

**Statement by Sri Lanka**

Mr. Keerthi Ranjith Abesiriwardana, Secretary, State Ministry of Rural Housing and Construction

Director, National Mine Action Centre of Sri Lanka

**Agenda Item 10. b) Clearing mined areas and Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) and reduction**

Thank you Mr. President,

- The three decade-long conflict in Sri Lanka left many areas in the Northern and Eastern parts of the country contaminated by anti-personnel mines and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW).
- The National Mine Action Programme was initiated in 2002 with the assistance of the international community. The initial focus was to help facilitate the safe resettlement of IDPs. The National Mine Action Centre established in 2010 acts as the operational body of the National Mine Action Programme having responsibility for coordination, evaluation and monitoring of the National Mine Action Strategy.
- The Humanitarian Demining Unit of the Sri Lanka Army performs clearance on behalf of the Government, and we acknowledge with appreciation the contribution made by many national and international mine clearance agencies in our efforts throughout the years.
- Significant progress has been made in Sri Lanka to date. Since 2002, Sri Lanka has been able to declare 4,980 areas totaling 200.78 square kilometers of land as free of antipersonnel mines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW). 833,435 antipersonnel mines and 1.5 million ERW including anti-vehicle mines, have been removed and destroyed through clearance operations conducted up to end of October 2021.
- We still have the challenge of clearing remaining 12.55 square kilometers with some of the densest contamination in the world very close to population centers.
- During this year a total of 3.68 square kilometers of land has been cleared in Anuradhapura, Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mannar, Mullaitivu, Trincomalee and Vavuniya Districts and 17,017 anti-personnel mines and 42,755 explosive remnants of war have been recovered.
- Sri Lanka's National Mine Action Strategy will be increasingly central to facilitate timely survey and clearance completion and fulfillment of the Convention obligations.
- The National Mine Action Center will continuously monitor progress against the

targets which will further enable the Centre and partners to address problems, improve performance, build on success and adapt to changing circumstances.

- The National Mine Action Centre has commenced completion of a survey in the Northern, Eastern and North Central provinces to identify the remaining Confirmed Hazardous Areas in the country to make a timeline to complete the de-mining in Sri Lanka.
- Considerable progress has also been made in the Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) sector. The Government, partnering with the UNICEF and national MRE organizations have together developed a MRE standard and policy. The MRE activities are coordinated at national and at district levels, including through national education system and village level Mine Action Committees.
- As a result of continuous EORE in the Northern and Eastern Province, the general level of understanding of mine/ERW threats has been considerably improved. Many people demonstrate mine-smart behavior by reporting suspected dangerous devices and areas and by educating their family or community members and newcomers on the existing threat and main risk-taking behaviors.
- All areas known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines have been marked and warning signs in Sinhala, Tamil and English are prominently displayed. Warning signs are replaced and maintained on a regular basis.

Mr. President,

- Mine action has been an essential part of wider peace and reconciliation efforts in Sri Lanka by making fertile agricultural land safe and allowing the development of national infrastructure and thereby facilitating resettlement of those who were displaced by the conflict. Therefore completing de-mining has been a priority area of the successive governments.
- We wish to take this opportunity to thank the national and international clearance partners, Sri Lanka Army De-mining unit, DASH, SHARP, The HALO Trust and MAG for their tireless efforts in locating and clearing landmines as well as the important work of all organizations involved in victim assistance, mine risk education and advocacy work.
- Sri Lanka is also immensely appreciative of all international donors that currently support Sri Lanka's mine action programme, China, Australia, Canada, Japan, United States, Norway and the European Union.
- We hope that with the continued support from the international partners, Sri Lanka will be able to complete its de-mining programme successfully, and to declare the country free of land –mines in the near future.
- Last but not least, we would like to acknowledge the continuous support of the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) for their work, including the work of the Art. 5 Committee on Mine Clearance of which Sri Lanka is a member at present. Thank you.