



**Twentieth Meeting of the States Parties to the
Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention
Geneva, 21-25 November 2022.**

**Statement of the Federal Republic of Somalia
on Clearance.**

Presented by Dahir Abdirahman Abdulle (Director General of SEMA)

Excellencies, distinguished colleagues, ladies, and gentlemen.

On behalf of Somalia, I am honored to be here with you today. It is indeed a privilege to provide an update on the implementation of Article-5 of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC), to this distinguished forum, the twentieth meeting of state parties (MSP20), on behalf of the Federal Government of Somalia.

As you may know, for over three decades, Somalia continues to suffer and endure the threat of landmines, explosive remnants of war (ERW) and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The landmine contamination along the border with Ethiopia and the widespread ERW contamination across the regions in the country, continue to negatively impact the civilian population; hampering security, recovery efforts and ultimately, the development of the country.

The stress from severe drought in the Horn of Africa, and more so in Somalia, has resulted in extensive internal displacements, forcing communities to travel to unsafe locations. Many of these migration routes and new settlements are home to unknown explosive threats. Landmines and other explosive ordnance have therefore been severely affecting the safety of the communities displaced by both the ongoing conflict and the drought, heightening the risks posed to an already exposed populace.

The persistent climate change-fueled humanitarian crisis is threatening the lives and livelihoods of Somalia's population, including those living in proximity to areas with landmine contamination. Migration in search of relief causes additional strain on the diminishing pastures and agricultural lands. This is also a clarion call for Mine Action practitioners to look into linkages between climate change and Explosive Ordnance contamination.

Beginning July 2022, the Somali government and local defense forces, supported by international forces, stepped up operations to expel anti-government elements from known strongholds in Galmudug and Hirshabele States of Somalia, with a view to recovering new areas from the militants. The use of IEDs by armed militants has increased along the roads linking settlements, and, in some instances, IEDs were deliberately used to target civilian infrastructure such as water points, riverbanks, and telecommunication facilities. The presence of IEDs and other explosive ordnance is a concern for the safe return of displaced families, protection efforts, and the restoration of basic services.

Since January 2021, about 74 civilians have been killed and injured by mines and ERW in 23 locations across the country. Most of them were children (over 80%). Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) have caused unparalleled harm, and civilians bear the brunt disproportionately, compared to other explosive ordnance. During this period, at least 2,200 people are known to have been killed or injured by IEDs in urban areas and main supply routes. Whereas civilians were not the main target, they accounted for more than 50% of the casualties. This is an alarming rate.

On a more positive note, and in a show of great solidarity with the government and people of Somalia, the president extended a great courtesy when Somalia received an extension to the implementation of her Article-5 obligations, during the 19th Meeting of State Parties in 2021, facilitating an additional five years to fulfill the outstanding requirements. This extension provided Somalia with an opportunity to reflect on the progress made in the past years and plan accordingly for the next five years.

Since July 2022, SEMA, along with the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) of the APMBC, UNMAS and Mine Action operators, have been working to develop a comprehensive, cost and time bound Work Plan encompassing clearance, risk education and capacity development activities in Somalia. The detailed work plan will be presented to the state parties early next year.

In the plan, the Somali National Mine Action Program will focus substantially on a comprehensive Non-technical Survey (NTS) exercise, to better identify the extent and true nature of landmine-contamination across the country, while providing risk education to the affected communities. The Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) is about to complete a non-technical survey covering the State of Puntland, by visiting villages where contamination was reported during the landmine impact survey (LIS). The NTS exercise has since resulted in reducing the registered contamination size to just 7.5 square kilometers, which is about half of the total area size recorded in the previous survey. The MA operators will continue surveying all accessible areas in other states to map out the contamination and plan for clearance.

Following the consolidation of data from all HMA partners, which has only just been concluded, it became apparent that the consolidated national database has recorded **173** confirmed hazards, and another **498** suspected hazardous areas within Somalia's territories. These all require additional response. In tandem with that, and with the support of GICHD and UNMAS, the national IMSMA database will be migrated from IMSMA NG to IMSMA Core in early 2023. Thus, SEMA will continue to refine its information management to address the explosive ordnance contamination more effectively in the country and keep track of the progress.

Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen

The National Mine Action Program in Somalia, along with international and national mine action operators continued its efforts to reduce the risk of explosive ordnance in the country, through the implementation of mine clearance, survey, and Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE). I am pleased to inform that almost all the five Federal States in Somalia have EORE capacity addressing the suffering of the civilian population, with the increased displacement due to the droughts and conflict, the Mine Action operators shifted their operations to deliver live saving EORE messages to displaced communities targeting the most vulnerable groups from the affected population.

Since June 2022, SEMA has been working with mine action partners, the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) and UNMAS to draft its article-5 implementation work plan. The plan will provide comprehensive coverage of the remaining challenges, planned surveys and clearance, EORE, as well as capacity development. SEMA plans to submit the work plan in early 2023.

In October 2022, SEMA along with GICHD and UNDP hosted a workshop on “beyond square meters” bringing together mine action operators in the country, to present a draft case study on linking Mine Action outcomes to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Somalia. This is a crucial step towards integrating mine action into the broader national development strategy and establishing linkages with development partners.

Distinguished delegates,

The Mine Action Program in Somalia faces several security and political challenges. While some parts of the country are liberated, and access is increasing, the mine action response capacity to address the needs of the affected community remains limited. Insufficient funding is forcing some international mine action operators to cease operations and withdraw. This is a major concern for Somalia and a likely drawback to the efforts towards meeting the new deadline of October 2027.

As highlighted, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) are causing disproportionate effects on the civilian population, resulting in an average of 3 casualties per day. The IED victims in Somalia continue to grow in number and the available response is very limited, particularly the provision of Victim Assistance.

The threat of explosive ordnance continues to hinder progress in security, development, recovery, and humanitarian assistance in Somalia, by presenting significant safety concerns and mistrust amongst citizens and national security service providers. Landmine contamination along the Somalia-Ethiopia border also dramatically hinders access to productive land resources and community infrastructure. This situation has persisted for generations, perpetually endangering the lives and livelihoods of the population. Somalia’s people and institutions can no longer afford to continue suffering from the carnage of explosive hazards without end. Instead, the explosive hazard contamination must come to an end.

The National Mine Action Authority (SEMA) continue to play a critical role in coordination, management, and other mine action efforts. The government of Somalia wishes to hereby appeal to well-wishers, partners, the international community and friends of Somalia, to support the mine action program in Somalia as a priority; to continue providing funding and technical support, which will enable Somalia to meet her new deadline in mine clearance obligations.

Your excellencies

Allow me to reiterate the commitment to our national mine action strategy, in addition to accomplishing our obligation in the article-5 of the Ottawa Treaty, our focus will remain to scale up Non-technical Survey (NTS), while continuing with the ongoing clearance activities, with a view to improving the safety and freedom of movement among the affected communities.

On behalf of the Government of Somalia, I would like to express profound gratitude to the people and governments of the donor countries and organizations, with special mention to the **Halo Trust Somalia Programme**, European Union, the governments of Japan, the United Kingdom, Norway, Germany, the United States, and the United Nations, for their generous contributions to the mine action program in Somalia.

Your unrelenting support is making a difference in the lives of men, women, boys and girls, giving them hope that they too can one day find peace and safety in a home, a village, a school, a farm and a playing field, free from the threat of being just inches away from their last breath. Your support is making a difference by enabling Somalia to meet its obligations under the convention and building a brighter future for the people of Somalia.

Thank you!