

**Statement of the Delegation of the Kingdom of Thailand
by Gen. Supathat Narindarabhakdi,
Director-General of the Thailand Mine Action Center
at the 20th Meeting of State Parties (20MSP)
“Informal presentation of requests submitted under Article 5
and of the analysis of these requests”
21-22 November 2022, Geneva, Switzerland

(Slide 1 – Title)

Mr. Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,

At the outset, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to you, Mr. Chair, as well as the members of the Committee on Article 5 Implementation and the ISU for the invaluable support rendered to all States Parties in paving the way towards a mine-free world.

(Slide 2 – Overall Progress in Thailand’s Mine Action Efforts)

As well all know, mine clearance is **a complex task** – the mission demands **great efforts and strong determination** to overcome challenges and obstacles. It also requires a comprehensive approach to tackle the issues. Nevertheless, with our unweaving efforts over the past several years, Thailand’s mine action operation has been successful in clearing approximately **98.84%** of the mine contaminated areas and safely returned the land to its people.

However, due to **various challenges at the final stage** of our humanitarian mine action efforts, we have to submit a request to **extend our Article 5 deadline** set for 2023, by 3 years and 2 months.

Today, I would like to share with you our **lessons, progress, and plans** to fulfil Article 5 obligations.

(Slide 3 – Thailand’s Efforts and our International Partners)

Mine contaminated areas in Thailand were **predominantly results of the past conflicts**, which spilled over along the Thai borders. **Thailand Mine Action Centre (TMAC)** was established shortly after we ratified the Convention, to spearhead mine action in the country, by working with relevant agencies and international partners. We also carried out our demining mission with further assistance from **Japan, Norway and the United States**.

(Slide 4 - 20 Years of Learning and Development)

At the beginning of Thailand's mine action efforts, the **total estimated landmine contaminated areas covered 2,556 sq.km.** As of 1 October 2022, seven months after Thailand has submitted the current extension request, we were left with **29.7 sq.km. of mine contaminated areas**, which accounted for **1.16%** of the estimated areas during the Initial Landmine Impact Survey, most of which are situated along the **Thailand - Cambodia border.**

(Slide 5 – The Remaining Areas by Province)

During the second extension, Thailand has released at least **332.6 sq.km. of mine contaminated areas**, and has recovered at least **44,992 anti-personnel mines and 3,049 UXOs.** Five provinces, and the areas along **the Thailand – Myanmar border**, has been declared mine-free, while the work along **the Thailand – Lao PDR border** is almost complete.

Currently, the mine contaminated areas cover **6 provinces** – down from 7 provinces at the beginning of the year at the time of submission of the extension request. **Phitsanulok** has been declared mine-free.

(Slide 6 – Factors that has led to Progress)

This progress has been made possible by strengthening operations in the following areas:

(Slide 7 – Updated Work Plan & Information Management)

First, the effective implementation of the Five-Year Work Plan, which is the roadmap for Thailand's mine action. **Phase 1** of the Work Plan focused on non-technical survey in the SHA was completed and we are currently at **Phase 2**, with the focus on the Technical Survey and Clearance, based on information obtained during Phase 1.

Second, the improvement of Information Management (IM), including by enhancing the capacity of TMAC's IM team, the IM systems, and standardisation of the processes for obtaining information.

(Slide 8 – Thai Government Funding)

Third, continued commitment towards funding by the Royal Thai Government, which is the **primary source** of funding for the humanitarian mine action in Thailand, with the overall spending of **approximately USD 42 million** during the second extension.

(Slide 9 – Strengthening International Cooperation)

Fourth, strengthening international cooperation at all levels. In addition to continued cooperation with **Japan, Norway, and the United States**, Thailand has also been cooperating with **Cambodia** through **bilateral mechanisms**, including the “Pilot Project on Demining Cooperation along the Border of Thailand and Cambodia” in 2020.

In addition, Thailand has also been working towards **strengthening community engagement, Mine Risk Education and Victim Assistance**. In 2019, we have carried out **complete destruction of all stockpiled anti-personnel mines** retained for research and training purposes, which has shown our strong commitment towards the spirit of the Convention.

(Slide 10 – Challenges towards the Completion of the Mine Clearance)

Thailand’s significant progress made during the second extension has been made despite the following **challenges**:

(Slide 11 -High level of Mine Contamination and Challenging Landscape)

First, high-level of contamination and challenging geographical landscape. On average, **1 mine per 3.8 square metres** was found between 2020 – 2021. Deminers also face **extreme geographical landscape**, including rough terrains and dense forest. In an effort to overcome this, projects such as the “**Ruang Phueng**” operation have been introduced by using helicopters to transport the deminers to carry out their operations.

(Slide 12 – COVID – 19 Impact)

Second, for more than 2 years, the pandemic has negatively affected Thailand’s demining operations, from travel restrictions to physical contact restrictions, limitation of human resources, and reduction in financial support from international partners, which has become a challenge towards the efforts to strengthen cooperation in the areas along the border.

(Slide 13 – Access to areas along the border)

Third, access to the areas along the border. As Thailand's demining operations move closer to **the Areas to be Demarcated (ADs)** along the border, since November 2020, Thailand's humanitarian mine action operators were **occasionally requested to stop their operations**. After several unsuccessful attempts to access the areas, Thailand decided to suspend the demining operations in the above-mentioned areas in order to avoid unnecessary misunderstanding. Such areas account for **roughly half of the total remaining areas** at the time of submitting this request.

(Slide 14 – Work Plan for the Requested Extension Period)

Mr. Chair, despite challenges, Thailand remains fully committed to completing its Article 5 obligations. In case where the completion of the mine action operations is not possible during the current timeframe, Thailand intends to continue its efforts during the requested extension period of 3 years under the following **work plan**:

During the remaining period of the second extension, Thailand believes that we will be able to clear all mine contaminated areas, apart from the Areas to be Demarcated along the border.

For the Requested Extension Period, Thailand has also developed the Three-Year Work Plan, which will focus on the **remaining 14.31 sq.km. of Areas to be Demarcated** by strengthening cooperation with its neighbouring country, through bilateral, regional and multilateral mechanisms. Thailand will continue to **ensure its neighbour** that such demining operations are carried out for humanitarian purposes only and shall be without prejudice to the rights of both parties with regard to land boundary under international law.

Mine action in Thailand is **primarily funded by the Royal Thai government**, which is fully committed to **continue supporting TMAC's humanitarian operations** during the requested extension period.

(Slide 15 – Activities to be carried out)

With the success of the Pilot Project, the Royal Thai Government and TMAC have put priority on the continued **dialogue and consultation with Cambodia** regarding new **joint demining operations**. Thailand and Cambodia are currently in the process of choosing the areas for the joint project. Thailand has proposed the selected areas to CMAC. After the areas are agreed, the TMAC hopes that further mine action in the Areas to be Demarcated could be taken.

Bilateral frameworks such as **Joint Commission (JC) on Bilateral Cooperation between Thailand and Cambodia** chaired by Deputy Prime Ministers and Ministers of Foreign Affairs of both countries and **the Thai-Cambodia General Border Committee (GBC)** – the bilateral framework for military cooperation – have been utilised to forge cooperation on demining operations as reflected in the latest outcome documents under the two frameworks.

(Slide 16 – MRE Efforts during the 2nd Extension)

Besides the mine clearance efforts, Thailand is also aware of the importance of **Mine Risk Education** as part of the holistic approach towards the implementation of the Convention. During the second extension, MRE activities have been conducted through all available channels on 637 different occasions with almost 84,000 participants, including through **public information campaigns, education and training, and creating networks** with the local communities for the sustainability of the MRE process, with a particular focus on delivering MRE messages directly to the locals.

As Thailand fully supports the promotion of **gender mainstreaming** into mine-action efforts in line with **Sustainable Development Goal 5 on Gender Equality**, there has been a significant level of engagement of female village health volunteers and female teachers in our MRE activities.

(Slide 17 – Plan for Mine Risk Education in Border Areas 2024 - 2026)

During the requested extension period, TMAC has plan for the **MRE in all provinces affected by landmines** to minimize the chances of mine related accidents. The approach will be similar to the past implementation but will focus more on the **specific areas affected by landmines and UXOs along the border.**

(Slide 18 – Closing: Thailand's Commitment Towards Fulfilling Art 5 Obligations)

Last but not least, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our partners who provide **invaluable support** to Thailand in its efforts to fulfill the Convention's obligations, namely: the governments of **Japan, Norway, and the United States; the Marine Corps Forces, Pacific; the HD R&D Program; the Norwegian People's Aid; the Golden West Humanitarian Foundation; and the Thai Civilian Deminer Association.**

I would also like to reiterate that Thailand is endeavored towards completing its **Three-Year Work Plan** by releasing all mine contaminated areas by the end of the requested period. We reaffirm our full commitment towards the Convention and will continue to cooperate with all parties to fulfill our Article 5 obligations.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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