

Mine Action Programme of Cambodia

Mine Action in Cambodia: Status and Challenges in Implementation

Tuesday, 21 June 2022

I. Introduction and participants

On 21 June 2022, Cambodia 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 Cambodia's needs and challenges in implementing its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention. In particular, Cambodia's efforts to complete its mine clearance commitments by 2025.

In preparation for the event participants received a package including an invitation, agenda and Cambodia's presentation, (delivered version attached). These documents will be made available on Cambodia's country page of the Convention website¹.

II. Participation

States: Australia, Canada, Germany, Guinea-Bissau, Japan, Myanmar, Switzerland, Thailand, the United Kingdom, the United States.

Organizations: ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre (ARMAC), European Union, Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Mines Advisory Group (MAG), Mine Action Review (MAR), Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), Sir Bobby Charlton Foundation, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United States (Department of State).

III. Status and challenges in implementation

Opening remarks

Ms. Nana Nagai, First Secretary, Delegation of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament and Chair of the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance provided a warm welcome and overview of the Individualised Approach. H.E Sokkhoeurn An, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Cambodia to the United Nations in Geneva then provided opening remarks with a focus on Cambodia's extensive efforts to address anti-personnel mines and the positive impact of these efforts on the population. H.E. gave thanks to the strong support of donors and partners in support of Cambodia's efforts.

Presentation by the Cambodian Mine Action Authority

Mr. Prum Sophakmonkol, Secretary General of the Cambodian Mine Action Authority (CMAA) offered a presentation on the progress, current status and key challenges to the implementation of the Mine Action Programme in Cambodia.

¹ <https://www.apminebanconvention.org/states-parties-to-the-convention/cambodia/>

H.E. Mr. Prum Sophakmonkol began by presenting the history of Cambodia's Article 5 challenge and the continued impact of contamination on the population before providing an overview of Cambodia's progress and achievements during the same period, 2002-2022.

Mr. Sophakmonkol then outlined Cambodia's current Article 5 remaining challenge currently consisting of 735 square kilometres and highlighted 4 groups of challenges to be addressed in order for Cambodia to reach completion, procedural, technical, operational and financial. Mr. Sophakmonkol then provided an overview of Cambodia's national structure and plans to address the challenges and its remaining Article 5 challenge, including a projected output of 348 square kilometres to be addressed in the period, 2022-2023 with a required budget of US\$133 million.

Presentation by the Cambodian Mine Action Centre

H.E. Mr. Oum Phumro, Deputy Director General, of the Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC) then provided key remarks on the status of mine clearance in Cambodia and highlighted some key challenges faced by the mine action programme.

H.E. Mr. Oum Phumro, Deputy Director General, of the Cambodian Mine Action Centre then provided personal reflections and remarks on the current status and challenge faced by the Cambodian Mine Action Programme, including the role of CMAC as the national demining organisation. Mr. Phumro noted the importance of CMAC applying all reasonable effort to address its remaining challenge had resulted in the release of 1,300 square kilometres of land over 29 years. Mr. Phumro also focused on the role of the community-based demining model and the support of JICA in building capacity of CMAC. He mentioned that CMAC has a plan to increase productivity by 100% over the remaining period of the extension request, (to almost 200 square kilometres per year). Mr. Phumro elaborated that this would be achieved through more effective prioritisation, continued collaboration with NPA towards the achievement of mine free provinces, and that CMAC will also continue its work with JICA on a post-completion strategy, for the period post-2025.

IV. Summary of interventions and discussions

GICHD took the floor to highlight the key factors of success in mine action including, strong national ownership, sustainable local capacities that can move into post-completion phases, effective methodologies and tool, strategies and funding. GICHD focused on its support to Cambodia, including Information Management and a recent review of the current legal policies and operational capacities to address residual contamination post completion. The GICHD also highlighted its work with Cambodia on mine action and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as gender and diversity mainstreaming, including the first national standard on gender and diversity.

NPA took the floor to thank Cambodia for its presentation which showed clear improvements over the past two years and more effective planning towards 2025. NPA highlighted that the scale of Cambodia's remaining challenge of 735 square kilometres was immense and the strong planning in place to achieve this goal. NPA mentioned the importance of Kep Province as the first mine free province, and that the province acknowledges that after 30 years achieving "mine free" provinces is possible. NPA highlighted the strong cooperation between NPA, CMAA and CMAC in realising this goal with the possibility of 7 more provinces becoming "mine-free" in the near future. NPA noted the role of CMAC in responding to residual contamination post 2025. NPA highlighted its current focus is on partnership in developing innovating procedures, non-technical survey and developing national standards.

MAG took the floor to share its expertise gained by working with Cambodia for (30) thirty years. MAG welcomed Cambodia's strong progress and mentioned its support for Cambodia as it works towards completion. MAG mentioned that it will work in Ratanakiri as part of the mine-free province approach. MAG also mentioned it took part in the ARMAC and GICHD workshop on residual risk management and commended CMAA for convening a forward-looking strategic meeting. MAG

noted that despite its progress Cambodia required cooperation and assistance to achieve its ambitious targets and encouraged all States in a position to provide assistance to step up their support, including the role of innovative financing models that can complement existing financing streams, noting the importance of these stream to be community centred and not exacerbate any existing power imbalances. MAG also thanked Cambodia for its participation in the gender and diversity workshop and that Cambodia sets a good example for the sector in this regard.

Thailand took the floor to thank Cambodia for its excellent briefings on the situation and the progress Cambodia is making towards fulfilling its mine action goals and improving the livelihoods of the people of Cambodia. Thailand further noted that as both Cambodia and Thailand work towards fulfilling their respective obligations there will be opportunities to cooperate, particularly in areas along the border. Thailand referred to the Record of Discussion of the 11th Thai-Cambodia Joint Committee on Bilateral Cooperation of December 2021 and noted that both Governments had reached a common understanding for both sides to discuss and further the work on humanitarian demining, while leaving aside the issue of delimitation and demarcation. This would provide the best opportunity for both countries to realise the development potential on both sides of the border. Thailand noted the successful example of the first Thai-Cambodia pilot project and, while noting that unfortunately COVID-19 interrupted the second pilot project, Thailand hoped to build further trust, understanding and cooperation for the second pilot project and to further the work and cooperation along the border. Thailand further remarked that it remains ready to support, work together and achieve the goal of 2025.

Switzerland took the floor to express its appreciation for the presentations outlining the progress and the challenges of the work in Cambodia. Switzerland reiterated its support for Cambodia's SDG #18 to make Cambodia "mine-free" by 2025. Switzerland mentioned it had contributed over US \$7 million in support to Cambodia since 2015, and that Switzerland planned to continue its support in the period 2023-2025 to ensure the overall goal of improving the livelihoods of women and men and reduce casualties. In this regard, Switzerland underlined the crucial contribution mine action plays in development. Switzerland mentioned that its core contribution to the GICHD has enabled capacity building support in information management, and further played a role in the recent ARMAC workshop on residual contamination. Switzerland noted its role in coordination as a member of the national mine action coordination group and its regular participation in the national level mine action platform. Switzerland noted that these forums provide an excellent platform to discuss mine action and identify priorities.

The United States took the floor to thank the Government of Japan and Cambodia for convening this session. The US mentioned that it has been a strong supporter of Cambodia through its implementing partners and directly with the CMAA, CMAC and the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF). The US mentioned that the success of Cambodia is a result of the forward-looking approach that allows new methodologies and technologies to be brought into operation and the US appreciates the work achieved by Cambodia. The US mentioned its contribution of US \$130 million since the 1990's towards mine clearance, stockpile destruction as well as the clearance of cluster munitions. The US noted its joint funding with Switzerland on the recent ARMAC and GICHD residual contamination workshop. The indicated that it supports the mine free province approach that allows a success story to be told. The US noted the importance of ensuring that the populations understands that a "mine free" province does not necessarily mean free of unexploded ordnance. In this regard, the US noted the importance of Cambodia continuing to address high priority confirmed and suspected hazardous areas (CHA/SHA) regardless of which province they are located in and to ensure that all high priority areas are addressed. The US mentioned that as Cambodia looks toward 2025 the need for an effective response for access to areas along the border and around military installations. The US mentioned its appreciation for the work of Cambodia and that it remains firmly committed to supporting Cambodia's goals for 2025. The US outlined that its support for the fiscal year 2022 would be US \$ 9 million that will be allocated to CMAC, NPA, HALO trust, HI and the

Cambodian self-help demining association as well as MAG and Golden West that harvests explosives and offers all implementing partners demolition charges free of charge.

ARMAC took the floor to providing a short overview of ARMAC, that was established by ASEAN leaders in 2012. ARMAC explained that while they do not have a mandate for clearance, the Centre does maintain a clear mandate to promote the exchange of knowledge and experience to achieve set goals. ARMAC expressed its thanks to H.E. Ambassador AN as chair of the ASEAN group in Geneva, (Cambodia is the Chair of ASEAN in 2022). ARMAC further congratulated the work of Cambodia and its role as a member of the ARMAC steering group as well as being its top donor. ARMAC noted the strong support from Thailand and looked forward to further collaboration on the joint project of mine clearance along the shared Cambodian/Thai border. ARMAC noted the workshop on residual contamination was testament to regional cooperation and multi-lateral efforts, and that ARMAC looked forward to supporting further event on a multi-lateral basis. ARMAC noted its aspiration to achieve an inclusive resilient community by 2025 based on ASEAN political and security blueprint.

The ICBL took the floor to thank Cambodia for its presentation and noted the strong national capacity present in country. The ICBL noted that Cambodia has shown utmost effort in its commitment to reach its December 2025 deadline and urged all donors and partners to support Cambodia as much as possible to reach this goal. The ICBL noted the role of mine clearance for socio-economic development and that Cambodia has integrated mine action plans into national development plans, strategies and the SDGs. The ICBL also noted that Cambodia's projection to double productivity over the coming years is ambitious and will need international support. In this way, ICBL urged all donors to support Cambodia to complete clearance of all APM by its deadline. The ICBL mentioned that the achievement of this goal would be dependent on the clearance of APM along border areas with Thailand and asked if there is a role for the international community in assisting this process? As well the possibility of another clearance operators, such as CMAC working with RCAF to hasten clearance along border areas? ICBL welcomed the commitment of Thailand to work towards the joint goals of 2025 and hoped that all can work to their utmost to realise this.

The Director of the ISU took the floor noting the importance of Cambodia to the Convention in a region that is currently under-represented by the Convention with a number of States not party in the region. The ISU congratulated Cambodia for its engagement with partners which has resulted in improved methodologies in implementation. The ISU indicated that support from the international community to Cambodia sends a clear message to States not Party that cooperation and assistance will flow more readily to States Parties to the Convention. The ISU further indicated that Cambodia also sets an important example of engagement and regular dialogue with partners and send a strong message of what can be achieved within the framework of the Convention.

In response to the interventions from the floor H.E. Prum Sophakmonkol took the floor to note that within the remaining Article 5 challenge of 735 square kilometres, an estimated 57% is located further than 7km from the border and that CMAA will prioritise the role of implementing partners to address these areas. H.E. further noted that in terms of the second pilot project, 41 of 43 mine fields had been agreed and that CMAA is working with RCAF to provide training and equipment to carry out clearance, noting that the Joint Border Committee is working together with CMAC and TMAC H.E. Sophakmonkol gave the floor to H.E. Oum Phumro to provide further clarity in this regard.

H.E. Mr. Oum Phumro further elaborated that CMAC and TMAC had been assigned to carry out the task of border clearance. H.E. Oum Phumro acknowledged the spirit of the agreement stipulated in both the Joint Border Committee and the and General Border Committee, two mechanisms, that fall under the Ministry of foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defence of the two countries, respectfully. H.E. Mr. Oum Phumro. mentioned that Cambodia has full commitment to implement this agreement with no reservation in terms of what to do, there is only the question of how to proceed. H.E. Oum Phumro mentioned that CMAC remains in constant communication with armed forces to find a good

technical solution for border areas to be de-mined as soon as possible. H.E. Mr. Oum Phumro also mentioned that CMAC is in contact with TMAC and that, while COVID-19 interrupted its aims, it hopes to carry out a second pilot project with the support of TMAC and NPA in 2022. H.E. Mr. Oum Phumro mentioned it recently met with TMAC in Phnom Penh and plans to meet TMAC again in July to further identify sites for clearance along the border and expressed its willingness to work with TMAC in this regard.

H.E. Mr. Oum Phumro closed by mentioning that in terms of CMACs approach it will work in all accessible areas. With regard to building the capacity of armed forces the plan is to equip and train 2,000 military personal with an estimated budget of US \$ 19 million and that CMAC is training the armed forces to establish a demining capacity. Finally, H.E. Mr.Oum Phumro indicated that CMAC can respond to areas along the border if it has more equipment and budget support.

V. Closing remarks

In closing, H.E. Ambassador An provided closing remarks thanking all donors and operators for their commitments and that this will be met with strong national support from Cambodia.

Ms. Nana Nagai, First Secretary, Delegation of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament and Chair of the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance closed the meeting by providing an overview of next steps that the Committee together with Cambodia will bring together a report of the event and that this will be circulated to all participants with the aim to provide further impetus for engagement and follow up on specific matters that may be relevant to your State or organisations and that the report together with the presentation will placed on Cambodia's page on the Convention website.

For further information on the Mine Action Program in Cambodia please direct all queries to:

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