

**Mine Action Review statement on the Extension Request of Afghanistan (Agenda Item 7)  
(delivered by NPA on behalf of Mine Action Review)**

**Fifth Review Conference of the States Parties to the APMBC, 25–29 November 2024**

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am making this statement on behalf of Mine Action Review.

As this is the first time Mine Action Review is taking the floor we would like to thank Cambodia for its Presidency of the Fifth Review Conference and the strong consultative and participatory approach it has adopted throughout its presidency, and to thank also the Committee on Article 5 implementation and the ISU for their work this year to support Article 5 implementation.

As a matter of international law, Afghanistan is represented by the Taliban government following its takeover in August 2021. Since the change of regime, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) has affirmed its commitment to fulfilling its obligations in relation to international conventions to which Afghanistan is already a State Party, which includes the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC).

**The issue of recognition of the Taliban Government by the United Nations (UN) and individual States Parties is an entirely separate matter from treaty application and implementation**, just as it is under international humanitarian law. The issue of recognition should not prevent the government of Afghanistan from fulfilling its legal obligations under the Convention, including adherence to the Article 5 extension request process.

Mine Action Review therefore welcomes that the extension request of Afghanistan has been published for consideration by States Parties at this Review Conference, which is the legally correct course of action. We **support the Committee's recommendation for the Review Conference to grant the five-year extension request**, which will ensure Afghanistan has an Article 5 deadline in place and remains in compliance with the Convention.

The request comprehensively documents the mine action programme's achievements and progress since April 2013 and its plans for the next 5 years. It is important to note that this is the first substantive update on Article 5 implementation since the change of government in 2021. This is important as Afghanistan is one of only four massively mine contaminated States Parties, the impact on civilians is significant, and massive forced return of Afghan refugees from neighbouring countries has increased the urgency of clearance.

With respect to the **substantive content of Afghanistan's extension request**, Mine Action Review has the following observations:

- We welcome that Afghanistan has provided a comprehensive picture of all forms of explosive ordnance contamination and has disaggregated anti-personnel mines, including improvised mines, and mixed anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mine contamination, and its plans to address this.
- Following the change of regime, all parts of the country are now accessible, whereas previously many areas had been inaccessible. We welcome Afghanistan's plan to complete a **nationwide village-by-village survey** to establish an accurate baseline of all anti-personnel mined areas. Between 2013–2023, the programme managed to survey over 54% of

Afghanistan's 401 districts, and plans to survey the remaining 183 unsurveyed districts during the first 3 years of the Article 5 extension period, as well as re-survey other areas that are likely to have been recontaminated during the conflict. Implementation of this valuable initiative will be subject to availability of funds.

- The extension request is unclear about how much of the USD 12.5 million budgeted for the survey and associated explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) and explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) operations has already been secured. Afghanistan should provide more information on funding, including how much support the Afghan government will commit to mine action.
- We welcome that Afghanistan reports nearing completion of a **national mine action strategic plan** and is collaborating with UNMAS, GICHD, and other national and international stakeholders. It is important that donors support national operators, which have struggled to attract international support, as well international organisations. It is also important that donors put funding of the essential planning and coordination functions performed by the UN Mine Action Technical Cell on a stable and sustainable basis.
- Afghanistan's **land release targets** for anti-personnel mine contamination total 176km<sup>2</sup> over the five-year extension period but appear to assume greater funding and capacity than currently exists. Greater clarity on this would be useful.
- We note and welcome that reference to a planned standalone goal on **inclusion and empowerment of women and other marginalized groups** in mine action sector, in Afghanistan's upcoming national mine action strategic plan, which Afghanistan says shows commitment toward gender and diversity mainstreaming. Mine Action Review welcomes this, especially in light of the very oppressive policies of the Taliban government with regards to women's rights and gender equality, and we will seek to monitor its implementation as an essential part of mine action programming.

Finally, DMAC and the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan have committed to regularly update State Parties regarding the progress and outcomes of the nationwide survey, and any changes to its work plan. We encourage Afghanistan to submit annual **Article 7 transparency reports** and hope that the mine ban community can find a way to enable DMAC to provide substantive updates to States Parties at treaty meetings.

Thank you.