



**SPEECH**

**BY THE**

**MINISTER OF DEFENCE**

**ON THE**

**NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS DIALOGUE**

**ON**

**HUMANITARIAN DEMINING**

**AND**

**MINE VICTIM ASSISTANCE**

The Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution:  
Harare Metropolitan Province, Hon. C. Tawengwa,

The Minister of Public Services, Labour and Social Welfare, Hon.  
E. Moyo,

The Minister of Veterans of the Liberation Struggle Affairs, Hon.  
M. Mavhunga,

The Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution:  
Mashonaland Central Province, Hon. C. Magomo,

The Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution:  
Manicaland Province, Hon. M. Mugadza,

The Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution:  
Masvingo Province, Hon. E. Chadzamira,

The Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution:  
Matabeleland North Province, Hon. R. Moyo,

The Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution:  
Mashonaland East Province, Hon. I. Ndudzo,

Your Excellency, the European Union Ambassador to Zimbabwe,  
Ambassador J. von Kirchmann,

Your Excellences Heads of Missions Accredited to Harare here  
present,

Chief Secretary in the Office of the President and Cabinet,  
Dr. M. Rushwaya,

Chairman of the Public Service Commission, Dr V Hungwe,

Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Defence, Cde ADT  
Nhepera,

Secretary for the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Mr S Masanga and other Permanent Secretaries here present,

Commander Zimbabwe Defence Forces, General PV Sibanda,  
Service Chiefs,

Director of the Implementation Support Unit of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, Mr Juan Ruan Carlos,

Senior Government officials here present,

Zimbabwe Mine Action Programme Managers,

Members of the Media,

Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning to you all!

I am deeply honoured to welcome you all to this three day Second Edition of the National Stakeholders Dialogue on Humanitarian Demining and Mine Victim Assistance in Zimbabwe that is being held here in Harare. To those who are coming from outside Harare, it is my hope that you travelled safely and that you were well received and are ready for the task ahead. Feel free to explore the many tourist attractions that the capital city and the country at large have to offer.

The Dialogue is part of Zimbabwe's efforts to mobilise enough resources for her mine action programme in pursuit of the quest for a mine free Zimbabwe and by extension, the entire world. The Dialogue

looks to galvanize our traditional partners and all other stakeholders towards the realisation of this noble cause.

The first day of our programme will be devoted to discuss mine clearance while the remaining two will focus on mine victim assistance. To add value to our discussions and share experiences, participants to the Dialogue are drawn from all walks of life across the globe. We have in our midst, representatives from various Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), the donor community, traditional leaders from affected communities, representatives from parliament, the media and, most importantly, survivors of mine accidents.

Ladies and gentlemen, this Dialogue Workshop is yet another reminder of Zimbabwe's commitment to the aims and objectives of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) that yearns for a world free of landmines. To achieve this, there is need for concerted efforts from all stakeholders including the donor community. There is also need to engage the affected communities, bilateral and multilateral cooperation and most importantly, unwavering commitment by all state parties, to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

It is disconcerting ladies and gentlemen that, despite the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention coming into force twenty-five years ago, there are still many people around the world who are living in fear of becoming landmine victims. Many have lost their lives and others have



been maimed as a result of landmine accidents. At this juncture may I kindly request all of us to rise and observe a minute of silence in honour of men, women and children who lost their lives to landmines.

In Zimbabwe, minefields were planted by the Rhodesian Colonial Forces at the height of the armed struggle for independence in the 1970s with a view to inhibit the movement of freedom fighters to and from the neighbouring countries of Zambia and Mozambique. The minefields transcended six provinces of Zimbabwe that include Matabeleland North, Mashonaland West, Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East, Manicaland and Masvingo, covering an area of 310,650 Square Kilometres.

Since independence, significant progress has been registered towards making Zimbabwe a mine free zone. To date, all except 12, 0 km<sup>2</sup> of the mine infested area has been cleared and handed back to communities for economic exploitation. This represents 4% of the total minefields inherited at independence, a phenomenal achievement indeed, notwithstanding erratic and inadequate funding.

The Zimbabwe National Army's National Mine Clearance Unit has completed the main minefield in Victoria Falls Matabeleland North up to Mlibizi, leaving a small portion at Lusulu. In Mashonaland West, the minefield around the Kariba Power Station was again cleared by the National Mine Clearance Unit thereby making the Province mine free.

n Mashonaland Central, demining in Mt Darwin District was completed by the HALO Trust. Mine clearance is nearing completion in Rushinga District giving hope that the province will soon be mine free. Similarly, Manicaland Province is now mine free following completion of mine clearance in the four Districts of Chipinge, Mutasa, Mutare Urban and Mutare Rural. The Norwegian People's Aid was working in this province and post clearance control through quality control was done by 15 December 2024. A handover/takeover ceremony of the cleared land will take place in April 2025.

Significant progress has also been registered in Masvingo Province where the entire 53 km primary minefield was completed by the Zimbabwe National Army's National Mine Clearance Unit. Currently the Unit and APOPO are working on the secondary minefield in the Province. Mashonaland East, where the Mine Advisory Group and the Norwegian People's Aid are operating, remains one of the most affected provinces. More operators will be deployed to this Province as soon as they complete demining the areas they are currently working on.

Our projection was to complete demining by December 2025. This is no longer realisable due to challenges associated with the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic and fluctuations in funding from the international donor community. As a result, we are working on

submitting another three-year Extension Request to the Secretariat of the Treaty.

The funding gap as at September 2024 and completion of mine clearance in Zimbabwe by 2028 was **USD 23.79 million**. On its part, the Government of Zimbabwe will continue to fund the National Mine Clearance Unit which requires a minimum of **USD2 000 000** per year.

It is our hope that deliberations during this workshop will help unlock funding for mine action in Zimbabwe as completion of mine clearance is hinged on sustained funding from Government and current and new donors. Completion of mine clearance in Zimbabwe will not only help enhance safety and security in affected communities but will also go a long way in unlocking sustainable socio-economic development. This is in tandem with Zimbabwe's national development agenda which seeks to uplift the lives of the vulnerable who are affected the most by the continued presence of landmines in their communities. It also resonates well with the Second Republic's Vision under the astute Leadership of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe and Commander-in-Chief of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces, Cde Dr. ED Mnangagwa, **of an empowered and prosperous Upper-Middle Income Society by 2030, that leaves no one and no place behind.**



plans are afoot to come up with appropriate interventions for the post-completion period, including a demobilisation strategy for deminers and maintenance of a capacity to handle residual mine contamination. The Zimbabwe National Mine Clearance Unit will remain in place to handle cases of residual contamination. Mine victim assistance is expected to take centre stage as we march towards the tail end of mine clearance.

The Ministry of Defence, with support from the Geneva Centre for International Humanitarian Demining and other partners, crafted the Zimbabwe Mine Action Strategy that guided our activities for the period 2018 to 2025. A new strategic document that speaks to the current realities on the ground and takes into account lessons learnt from our experiences, is now required. The strategy is key in guiding our operations and helps to identify stakeholders and priority areas. We look forward to the usual support from partners and stakeholders in coming up with the new Mine Action Strategy. It is, therefore incumbent upon this meeting to ensure deliberations also encompass the way forward in this regard.

Another equally important matter is the preparation and submission our request for extension of mine clearance deadline to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Secretariat. This will be our sixth request for extension following our accession to the Treaty in 1999. I am pleased to note that



work in this regard has already commenced, and with the usual support from stakeholders, I have no doubt that the request will be successful. Ladies and gentlemen, the Government of Zimbabwe will not only continue to avail resources to the national mine action programme but will also continue to mainstream mine action in its programming. Government acknowledges that comprehensive implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty requires a Multi-Sectoral and a whole of Government Approach. The government of Zimbabwe will also continue to support calls for the universalisation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty and to share experiences with other state parties.

At this juncture, let me take this opportunity to extend my profound appreciation to the donor community for continuing to support mine action in Zimbabwe. We owe it to them for the huge strides that have been registered so far towards the finalization of mine clearance.

I would also like to thank the Implementation Support Unit and the European Union for supporting the hosting of this event. Our deliberations are going to reveal the progress and the challenges faced so far in mine action in Zimbabwe as well as inform on the mitigation measures that are necessary to overcome those challenges.

As I conclude, I once again welcome you all to Zimbabwe and to the Sunshine city of Harare in particular. I thank you all for being part of this important engagement and look forward to fruitful deliberations.

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