



Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Afghanistan's Statement on Clearing Mined Areas

APMBC Intersessional Meeting

Geneva

25 – 26 June 2015

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Afghan delegation, I have the honour of presenting the achievements of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in fulfilling its commitments under Article Five of the Convention, and the challenges it continues to face.

In the 12th Meeting of States Parties, the deadline for Afghanistan under Article Five was extended to March 2023. A ten year work plan was developed in support of Afghanistan's request for that deadline extension, implementation of which began on 1st April 2013 by the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan or 'MAPA'.

We are now in the third year of the Extension Request Work Plan. While MAPA achieved its clearance target for year one, achievement was only 61% of the target for year two due to a shortfall in funding. Nevertheless, during year two which ended in March 2015, MAPA cleared 662 minefields and battlefields amounting to an area of 51.13 sq km and cancelled 111 sites covering an area of 16.25 sq km. As a result of this clearance, 11,776 anti-personnel mines, 522 anti-tank mines and 238,247 ERW were destroyed and 168 communities in 74 districts declared free from all types of known explosive hazard. In the same period, 596,589 Afghans, including men, women, boys and girls received mine and ERW risk education.

Almost three months into year three, only 51% of the required funds have been secured. The work plan target for the year is to clear 789 minefields and battlefields with an area of 75.4 sq km. Progress made during April indicates that we are falling behind that target and the reason is a lack of financial resources.

A nationwide non-technical survey, which is part of the Extension Request Work Plan, has been under implementation since May 2012. The objective of this survey is to visit every community in Afghanistan, whether impacted or not, so to validate information collected through the Landmine Impact Survey and other information collected prior to 2005. It will ensure that the national database on mines and ERW is accurate and up to date.

The plan was to visit 1,726 impacted communities and 30,722 non impacted communities. Non-impacted communities are visited to ensure that they are truly free from explosive hazards. So far, 60% progress has been made. 1,378 hazards covering 145 sq km which were missed from previous surveys have been identified and added to the national database. 435 hazards with an area of 38 sq km have been cancelled.

Insecurity resulting from ongoing conflict remains a major challenge threatening successful fulfilment of Article Five commitments in my country. It is not only impeding the smooth delivery of demining services in some areas but has also left behind new ERW contamination on battlefields and in military firing ranges. Records reveal that during the last three years more than 87,000 armed clashes have occurred all over the country.

In addition to landmines and ERW, the presence of improvised explosive devices is another big threat to the lives of civilians in Afghanistan. Indiscriminate use of IEDs is a common tactic employed by insurgents. In 2014 alone, 2,978 civilians fell victim to IEDs in Afghanistan out of which 925 were killed and 2,053 injured. This means that the number of civilian casualties from IEDs is about seven times that which results from landmines and ERW. Nearly 20% of casualties are because of pressure plate IEDs – which are de facto antipersonnel mines.

80% of recorded mines and ERW have been cleared, and civilian casualties from conventional mines and ERW have decreased from 150 per month in 2001 to 38 per month during 2014. Only a small proportion, 3.5 a month on average, result from mines. The rest result from ERW, many of which are the legacy of the post-2001 conflict. Unfortunately, an additional 52 pressure-plate IED casualties were recorded on average every month during 2014, presenting an enormous challenge to Afghanistan.

On behalf of my Government, I would like to thank the people and Governments of donor countries for their generous contributions in support of the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan. The United States of America is the MAPA's biggest donor. Other donors include Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway Sweden and the United Kingdom

Thank you all for your attention.