



IRELAND

Written Submission on the occasion of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Intersessional Meetings

30 June – 2 July 2020

Ireland expresses our thanks to H.E. Osman Abufatima Adam Mohammed, President of the Eighteenth Meeting of the States Parties (18MSP) to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (“the Convention”), and to the Coordinating Committee and the Implementation Support Unit (ISU), for the opportunity to provide updated information on the implementation of the Convention and the Oslo Action Plan (OAP).

Ireland is committed to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention as the means to end the abhorrent humanitarian harm caused by anti-personnel landmines, and to the Oslo Action Plan and its cross-cutting actions designed to intensify States’ efforts to complete time-bound obligations and achieve the vision of a world free of landmines by 2025.

We welcome the intersessional programme as an opportunity to contribute to setting a baseline value for all Oslo Action Plan indicators, against which future progress in meeting the goals of the Convention can be measured. In this regard, Ireland is pleased to provide the following updates in line with the request by the 18MSP President.

Matters related to Article 5 Implementation

Efforts to integrate mine clearance activities into other frameworks such as development plans, poverty reduction strategies and humanitarian response plans (OAP Action #1).

Ireland’s support to humanitarian mine action is underpinned by our policy for international development, *A Better World*, which establishes “reducing humanitarian need” as a policy priority. In launching this policy in 2019, Ireland committed to scaling up our development cooperation and humanitarian assistance to effectively deliver meaningful and sustainable change for affected communities. Stemming from Ireland’s *Humanitarian Assistance Policy*, funding is specifically earmarked to support humanitarian mine action partners, as a policy

priority. These efforts are further supported through policy for regional contexts, such as *Ireland's Strategy for Africa to 2025*.

Efforts to ensure that the different needs and perspectives of women, girls, boys and men are considered in planning and implementation of mine clearance activities (OAP Action #3 and also linked to OAP Action #45).

Ireland actively supports the integration of gender perspectives across the range of humanitarian demining programmes funded by Irish Aid, in recognition of the need to remove the barriers to full, equal and gender-balanced participation in and benefits from mine action.

Ireland's implementing partners are required, to the greatest extent possible, to promote gender equality in all aspects of the programmes, and to realise the representation of women staff members in both operational and support roles, including in senior positions in the field. Community Outreach Risk Education (CORE) teams should be gender balanced, ensuring access to all social groups, regardless of age and gender, in survey and explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) processes. Similarly, community liaison teams should be mixed gender, to aid the implementation of gender sensitive community liaison programmes.

Irish Aid monitors how this priority area is implemented when conducting monitoring visits, and found positive evidence in this regard when visiting the Irish Aid-funded humanitarian demining programmes in Zimbabwe in 2019.

Efforts made to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of survey and clearance, including by promoting the research, application and sharing of innovative technological means to this effect (OAP Action #27).

Ireland contributes to efforts to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of survey and clearance through the Irish Defence Forces, which maintain a capability to survey, search for, detect, clear and destroy landmines. This capability includes a range of detection equipment, mechanical clearance assets, disposal experts and specialist search and clearance teams. The Defence Forces also continues to provide qualified personnel to affected territories as advisors and experts on search and clearance operations. The Irish Defence Forces participated in the training of Jordanian Armed Forces in Mine and IED awareness and disposal during 2019. The Irish Defence Forces have deployed a mine clearance capability including mechanical clearance assets to both UNIFIL and UNDOF missions throughout 2019 and 2020.

Mine Risk Education and Reduction

Efforts to integrate mine risk education activities with wider humanitarian, development, protection and education efforts, as well as with ongoing survey, clearance and victim assistance activities (OAP Action #28).

For families living in proximity to landmines and unexploded ordnance, risk education is a matter of life and death. Irish Aid works with implementing partners to ensure a strong risk education focus in all our humanitarian demining programmes. Community outreach education teams are delivering effective risk education sessions and increasing knowledge and awareness among vulnerable communities.

Efforts to ensure that mine risk education and reduction programmes are context-specific to all affected populations and groups at risk and are developed on the basis of a needs assessment (OAP Action #29).

It is important that context-specific mine risk education programmes are made available to school children, who can be among those most impacted by landmines. An initiative of Irish Aid's implementing partner in Zimbabwe has been the donation of the 'Happy Readers' series of textbooks on mine safety to primary schools, which some have incorporated into their school's reading and learning curriculum.

Matters related to cooperation and assistance

Efforts to strengthen national coordination including by ensuring regular dialogue with national and international stakeholders on progress, challenges and support for implementation of their obligations under the Convention (OAP Action #44).

Ireland's engagement in the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and in humanitarian mine action more broadly is informed by various stakeholders, including those working on development cooperation, and disarmament and non-proliferation at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and by the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces. Ireland holds annual interdepartmental committee meetings, including on issues related to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, and all stakeholders remain in regular contact regarding Ireland's national and international engagement in this area.

Ireland is a consistent supporter of stakeholders working at the international level to support States Parties in the implementation of their obligations under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. We recently confirmed €20'000 for the Convention's Implementation Support Unit, to support its work in implementation and universalisation from 2020-21. Ireland has also consistently supported civil society's engagement in support of the goals of the Treaty.

In 2019, we provided €5,000 in support of Mines Action Canada's Mine Action Fellows Programme, which facilitated youth participation at the Oslo Review Conference. In 2020, we confirmed approximately €14'000 in support a similar Mines Action Canada Programme, which will increase the capacity of youth advocates to engage in awareness-raising efforts, including on the harm caused by landmines and the need for effective implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

Support provided to States Parties in the implementation of their commitments under the Convention (OAP Action #45).

In 2019, Ireland provided a total of €2 million in support of humanitarian mine action focused on anti-personnel mines specifically, in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Colombia, Somalia and Zimbabwe. This constituted a significant portion of the total €3.27 million provided by Ireland in support of humanitarian mine action more broadly in 2019. Since the adoption of the Oslo Action Plan in December 2019, Ireland has provided a total of €2.27 million and proposes to provide up to an additional €1 million, taking into consideration the ability of partners to implement their humanitarian demining programmes due to the challenges posed to the sector by the outbreak of Coronavirus.

Efforts carried out, where possible using existing mechanisms, to coordinate support for the effective implementation of Convention obligations by affected States Parties (OAP Action #46).

Ireland is a member of the Mine Action Support Group and engages with other members in efforts to coordinate humanitarian mine action programmes, in close coordination with the United Nations, mine action operating agencies and international organisations.

Ireland has also supported multilateral efforts at the United Nations General Assembly in support of mine action, including at First Committee and Fourth Committee in 2019, where we were among the Member States that supported Resolution 74/61 on the Implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and Resolution 74/80 on Assistance in mine action, respectively.

Matters related to universalisation

Actions taken by your State since the Fourth Review Conference to promote formal adherence to the Convention by States not party (OAP actions #11 and #12).

Ireland is a consistent supporter of the Implementation Support Unit of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, contributing to its activities in promoting implementation and

universalisation of the Convention. As stated, Ireland has recently approved support to the ISU for the period 2020 –21.

As a Member State of the European Union, Ireland provides support to the implementation and universalisation of the Convention, most recently through a project in support of the Maputo Action Plan, which has been extended until February 2021 as a result of the challenges posed to implementation by the outbreak of Coronavirus.

Stockpile destruction and retained mines

Actions taken by your State, since the Fourth Review Conference, to “review the number of retained anti-personnel mines to ensure that they constitute the minimum number absolutely necessary for permitted purposes” and actions taken to destroy all those exceeding that number (OAP actions #16 and #17).

As a State Party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, Ireland is subject to the general obligation not to produce or possess anti-personnel mines. The Defence Forces retain a minimal stock for the purposes of training and research in mine clearance techniques, in line with Article 3, paragraph 1 of the Convention. The mines retained for training and research purposes furthermore fully conform with the technical requirements of Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. As of March 2020, Ireland retains 53 anti-personnel mines (Type SB33) for the permitted purposes of training and research.

Actions taken by your State to explore available alternatives to using live anti-personnel mines for training and research activities.

To the extent feasible the Defence Forces use bulk explosives, practice mines and other improvised training devices as an alternative to using live mines.

Information on the purposes for which retained mines have been used and the results of this use.

The Irish Defence Forces is the only entity authorised to retain mines for permitted purposes of training and research. The Irish Defence Forces use live anti-personnel mines in the development and validation of mine render safe procedures and in training personnel in these procedures. Render safe procedures normally involve the destruction of the mine. Live mines are also used as part of the testing and validation of mechanical mine clearance equipment and in the training of personnel in the use of such equipment. Minimum metal content mines are used, as required, in the calibration and testing of mine detection equipment.

Where relevant, explanation on any increase or decrease in the number of retained anti-personnel mines.

As stated in Ireland's Article 7 Report for the year 2019, in that period, one Anti-Personnel Mine (Type SB33) was used in a mine awareness demonstration. One further mine was used in early 2020 bringing the total number of anti-personnel mines retained to 53 as of the end of March 2020.