

Intervention by Thailand
Article 5: Updates on Extension on Mine Clearance
Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and
Mine Action Technologies
On 20-22 June, 2011

Co-chairs,
Distinguished Delegates,

At the outset, I would like to inform the Committee that Thailand has made progress, although gradually, towards the full implementation of the Mine Ban Convention. Since the latest update at the 10th Meeting of States Parties (MSP) in December 2010, Thailand has demined an area of 2.2 square kilometers, reducing the total minefield clearance area to 546.8 square kilometers. The efforts resulted in the recovery of 604 mines, and have prompted the destruction of an additional 1,809 mines and unexploded ordnance found in minefields. A preliminary assessment has shown that budget constraints, insufficient technology, and unfinished demarcation continue to delay further the progress on Thailand's mine clearance.

On other fronts, during the past 6 months after the 10th MSP, there were 7 landmine casualties, an absolute reduction from the total landmine casualties of 23 during all of last year. The goal of zero-victim will be a challenge. Nevertheless, we hope that a reduction in the number of victims will continue to be the trend, reflecting the effectiveness of comprehensive mine risk education and mined area markings. In this light, another significant progress is the training and education on mine dangers for some 90,247 locals from 72 villages across the affected provinces.

In submitting an Article 5.1 extension request at the 9th MSP, Thailand anticipated significant progress on mine clearance as a result of a sizeable increase in funding, technical support and assistance, as well as Thailand's "Locating Minefields Procedure" approach. Some of this anticipated progress concretely materialized but many aspects remain a hindering challenge.

Nevertheless, Thailand continues to demonstrate our commitment to stay on track and to achieve the yearly objective for mine clearance. During the past six months, we have pressed and stimulated innovative approaches as follows:

Firstly, the development of National Mine Action Standards (NMAS) in compliance with the IMAS will receive a renewed focus this year. A series of seminars over seven days scheduled in July 2011 will focus on communicating to all stakeholders

non-technical surveys, technical surveys, and mine-clearance strategies. We believe that using intelligent information on the location of landmines through non-technical surveys coupled with technical surveys can significantly reduce the cost and time of demining. In assuring the safe release of land, residuals risks will be strictly managed using the principles of IMAS.

Secondly, a continued increase of 60 percent in annual mine action national budget will partially help match the high cost of demining. The increased budget will also be used towards greater access to demining technology, which can efficiently and rapidly clear minefields, in often less-than-ideal conditions such as in hilly or heavily-forested areas.

Thirdly, a concrete working relationship between the Thailand Mine Action Centre -the national focal point on mine action- and various national and international NGOs has contributed to progress. Apart from our existing cooperation with Norwegian People's Aid, TMAC has reached an agreement with our new partner – APOPO, and the operation will start soon. Cooperation with NGOs has been an integral driving force in the past, and will continue to raise awareness in civil society and the general public. Such awareness is also crucial in securing funds from parliamentarians and decision makers involved in approving the budget

Co-chairs,

Thailand is encountering some challenges, in particular the need for funds and access to novel technologies and equipment. We echo the call for international technical assistance, technology and equipment at reasonable costs. Financial assistance can also significantly accelerate the demining progress. We hope that this issue will be discussed in a greater extent in the newly established Standing Committee on Resources, Cooperation and Assistance.

Secondly, over 70 percent of mine-suspected areas remain along the border between Thailand and her neighbouring countries. Thailand reiterates her will to work closely with her neighbours to tackle this common humanitarian problem. Thailand is enthusiastic to build on the outcome of the Thailand Mine Action Centre's visit to Cambodia in January 2011 and will further engage with other neighbouring countries on this issue.

Co-chairs,

Despite some key concerns, we are confident that we are taking the right approach and will continue to intensify our efforts on track to making Thailand mine-

free for 2018. We again subscribe to the humanitarian spirit of the landmine convention and the countless sufferings it has curtailed.

Thailand looks forward to participating and engaging in discussion at the 11th Meeting of States Parties under Cambodia's chairmanship in Phnom Penh in November later this year.

Thank you.
