



**Islamic Republic of Afghanistan**

**Dr. Mohammad Daim Kakar**

**Director General, Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA)**

**Meetings of the Standing Committees of Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention -  
21-25 May 2012**

**Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Mine Action  
Technologies**

**Update on Extension Request**

**Geneva Switzerland**

*Excellencies,*

*Distinguished colleagues,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I am very pleased to be here and to have the opportunity to give an update on the progress of mine action in Afghanistan. I would like to announce that, since the last meeting in Cambodia, the Government of Afghanistan has submitted a request for a ten-year extension to its deadline to complete the destruction of anti personnel mines in mined areas in accordance with Article 5 of the Mine Ban Convention. We believe that, within 10 years, it will be possible for Afghanistan to be free from the impact of mines.

Through its long-running operations, the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan, known as the MAPA, has gained a wealth of experience and has achieved notable success. MAPA has made significant and valiant attempts since 1989 to survey the extent of contamination. Surveys include the National Survey launched in 1993, followed by general survey implemented from 1994 to 2002, and the Afghanistan Landmine Impact Survey, ALIS, which was implemented as an effort to confirm the extent of hazard nationwide shortly after Afghanistan ratified the Mine Ban Convention in 2003. Afghanistan considers the results of the ALIS, as of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005, to be the most accurate baseline from which progress can be measured. The results of the ALIS indicated that a total of 3,527 suspected AP hazardous areas covering a total of 445,6 sq km of land. In sum, 1,815 communities are directly impacted by both AP and AT minefields, affecting 5.9% of the total number of communities in Afghanistan.

From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005 until the end of 2011, implementers have made significant progress, despite an additional 3,285 hazards being added to the original challenge in the period since ratification. As well as contributing to the fall in casualty rates from a high point of 2,027 per year in 2001 to 391 in 2011, clearance has directly benefitted the socio-economic well being of both rural and urban communities. Besides the clearance, the fall in casualties also resulted from the continuous mine risk education campaign all over the country. In 2011, over one million Afghans attended MRE sessions, of whom 42% were women and girls.

Multiple factors have impeded compliance with the treaty and the requirement to remove all known AP mines within ten years of ratification.

- Under funding is one of the main reasons for the need to extend the deadline. Despite the generous funding of the international community, there always been a mismatch between the amount of funding required and the scale of the problem.
- Another reason is insecurity and ongoing conflict. Although demining operators have been able to continuously work amidst conflict, insecurity in many mine affected areas has slowed down and in some areas completely halted the progress of mine clearance.
- Lack of records and maps of mined areas have also been a major challenge, requiring extensive efforts to identify mined areas.
- Previously unknown minefields are being reported. As a result of increasing access and population movements previously unreported minefields are being found and added into the national mine action database, consequently the baseline for clearance has constantly increased.

- Competing priorities has been another reason for not meeting the deadline. There has been a considerable increase in implementation of major infrastructure projects, most of which needed demining support, and considerable resources had to be deployed to address the problem rather than focusing solely on AP minefield removal. In addition, due to presence of many high priority Anti-Vehicle landmines and ERW, which had a significant impact on the population, the MAPA was not able to focus only on anti-personnel mine clearance.

Despite MAPA's significant achievements, Afghanistan remains one of the most heavily mined countries in the world. Over one million Afghans live within 500 meters of landmine contaminated areas. During the last two years, an average of 42 civilians per month - over 50% of them boys - died or were injured in mine and ERW accidents. The number of communities directly impacted by AP landmines is 1,268. The presence of minefields reduces crop production, increases transport costs and adds obstacles to repatriation and rehabilitation.

The target for Afghanistan to reach Ottawa convention compliance is clearance of 4,151 AP minefields, covering 306.81 sq km. From a humanitarian prospective, Afghanistan cannot focus only on AP removal at the expense of AT and BF removal.

The work plan submitted as part of the extension request sets out projects in order of priority. There are 314 projects spread across Afghanistan, with the greatest number of projects in the Central Region. The work plan takes into account productivity rates, the number of available demining assets and security.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the estimated budget for the 10 year extension, which will ensure the clearance of all known anti-personnel and anti-tank minefields and battlefields, along with other activities such as survey, coordination and project management is an average of 66.7 million US dollars per year. We are very thankful to the international community that has generously funded the programme for many years. We are in process of seeking further assistance to ensure an Afghanistan free of the impact of mines by 2023.

The programme is now undergoing a significant transition. In March, the last of the international technical advisors left the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan, known as the MACCA, in a move towards complete national ownership of the mine action programme. The coordination centre is now fully Afghan, staffed by capable people with solid expertise built up over the past 20 years of demining in Afghanistan. Staff of the Department of Mine Clearance are now collocated with the MACCA to further facilitate the partnership and collaboration. To provide support to the work, a small UNMAS project office has been established on the same compound. The UNMAS office will remain a very important stakeholder in the coordination effort, and the MACCA will report both to the UNMAS office and to the Afghan government.

All this said, we are now confident that we not only have a clear picture of the problem, but also of the systems and the plan that will bring the problem to a close. We believe that the end is in sight and the goal of eliminating the impact of landmines in Afghanistan is possible within the coming decade.

We look forward to an Afghanistan free of mines and ERW, where people can walk safely across their fields and land is returned to productive use, contributing to stability, economic development and a better future.

Thank you