

Statement

By

The Head of Delegation

Of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

At

**The standing committee meeting to the Convention on the Prohibition of
the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti - Personnel Mines
and Their Destruction (The Ottawa Convention)**

**Geneva,
21 to 25 May 2012**

Madam Chair

Excellencies

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

Ethiopia is among the leading countries that joined the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention, which it signed in 1997, ratified on 17 December 2004 and has become State Party since June 2005. Please allow me to reflect on some of the major achievements in implementing the provisions of the Convention by Ethiopia.

Ethiopia suffered from landmine contamination left over from the conflicts dating back to the five year foreign occupation attempt of the mid -1930s and including the 1998-2000 war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) contamination in Ethiopia have negatively affected people's lives.

Consequently, the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia established a Government institution called, the Ethiopian Mine Action Office (EMAO), which is legally mandated with the crucial task of conducting mine clearance, Mine Risk Education and related activities.

Between 2002 and 2011, a de-mining of over 60 sq. Kms. of land mostly from the severely affected regions of Tigray, Somali and Afar

was completed, which contributed to the sustainable settlement of 366,000 people displaced by the border war with Eritrea.

Only Between 2007 and 2011, both through a technical and non-technical survey land release mechanisms, Ethiopian Mine Action Program have released 770.04 Sq. Kms of land. So far, Combined with indirect beneficiaries, it is estimated that a total of 2.55 million people have benefited as the result of these de-mining operations.

According to the available statistical data on the socio-economic benefit of mine clearance operations, 98% of the safe land released was used by local residents for farming and/or grazing thus contributing to the increased food security and agricultural development. The remaining 2% are utilized for housing of returnees and local inhabitants supporting their resettlement and rehabilitation as well as stabilization of peace.

The nationwide technical survey that was conducted in Ethiopia since 2007 confirmed that a remaining of some 315 suspected hazardous areas exist. With the completion of the survey, the remaining size is estimated to be 5.9 Sq.kms confirmed minefield areas and these will require de-mining services that last till the end of 2013.

As the locations of the remaining minefields are in the remote areas, mostly at the boarder of Somalia, The Ethiopian Mine Action Office was unable to create access to the places for landmine clearance. Moreover, de-mining supports are reducing with time. Therefore, also as a matter of solution, the Ethiopian Government has decided to transfer the Capacity together with the Mandates of the Mine Action Program to the Ministry of National Defense. This process of transfer

has been ongoing for the last few months and a complete transfer will be conducted soon after we return from this meeting.

We believe the decision is a crucial step in our trip to compliance and is important especially for three reasons

1. The remaining confirmed 5.9 sq. KMS. Minefield areas will be easily reachable to Ministry of National Defense than to the civilian Mine Action Program.
2. With demining resources and donations coming shorter and shorter, it is important that the landmine clearance is carried out by Ministry of National Defense, as Defense is in a better position for budgeting compared to the Mine Action Program.
3. The Built capacity will be in better use by Ministry of National Defense, as Ethiopian forces are widely involved in peace keeping operations in so many countries.

While our effort to comply with our obligations is cordial and the sustainment of our capacity is vital, I would like to use this opportunity to appeal to our esteemed donors to continue their usual support to the succession of our nearby journey to declare a mine free Ethiopia. A clear need has been identified for the continued humanitarian demining and mine risk education services, and the amount has been estimated as 10 million USD.

In this occasion, The Government and the People of Ethiopia extend their gratitude to their development partners for their support in our efforts to end the tragic human suffering caused by landmines and,

thereby promoting the socio-economic development efforts of our country.

In Conclusion, Madam Chair, on behalf of my delegation, I call upon all the States Parties to the Convention to join hands and step-up our efforts to make sure that the Ottawa Convention becomes an effective instrument that will pave the way for the betterment of millions of human beings affected by anti-personnel mines

I thank you