

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

Ladies and Gentlemen ...  
Distinguished guests ...

Since this is the first time our delegation is taking the floor, I would like to congratulate the state of Jordan, for declaring the clearance of all known minefields, and congratulate ICBL for the 20th anniversary of their establishment.

Under the slogan  
**((Let's work together to get rid of mines and remnants of war))**

The Iraqi delegation is honored to attend these meetings to further develop the general plans, aiming at "Iraq free of mines". In the beginning, I would like to highlight the seriousness of the real problem experienced by Iraq from north to south, in which mines and other remnants of war contamination, is one of the main reasons for the suspension of vital investment projects and blocking the progress of development wheel, along with prohibiting people's basic rights to live in a safe environment, free from the threat of mines and other explosive remnants of war. The history of mines contamination in Iraq, is back to the sixties of the last century as a result of wars and conflicts with more than one regional or international party, starting with the attacks on our brothers the Kurds and through the Iran-Iraq war and then attack on Kuwait, and even the last war in Iraq for bring down the former regime.

All this has made Iraq one of the most polluted countries in the world, because of the size of contaminations and number of mines in its territories. These are all consequences of the totalitarian regimes that left the phenomena of mines and pollutions in the environment, whether social, political or health..

The most difficult challenge that we face for mine clearance is that the previous regime did not leave even the maps of minefields that was planted, whereas States usually specify areas that are mined and document them with accurate maps, and when needed, put fences and signs in order to protect civilians and livestock. But all mentioned are also not done in Iraq.

So it is a difficult problem existing in thousands of kilometers of contaminated lands, which hamper the process of development and the famous agriculture in which Iraq is known with. As well as the impact on production, economy, electricity and water resources sectors, and turned many villages and countryside to the traps of death or disability.

Our government assumed the national responsibility and established a program for mine action, which hosted by our ministry (Ministry of Environment) and ratified Ottawa treaty in February of 2008, and we are working hard to develop and support capabilities in order to clear mine contaminated areas and also help thousands of mine victims and provide medical care, socio-economic rehabilitation and mine risk education campaigns, to raise awareness about safe behavior and to avoid injuries. And all this can only be achieved by unifying efforts and work with all partners.

The Directorate of Mine Action, under the Ministry of Environment, launched a national strategy for mine action on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2010, in which illustrated an overview of the roles and responsibilities of concerned ministries, stakeholders, partners and organizations.

Despite passing more than nine years of regime change in Iraq, but the mine problems still exist and we still record hundreds of victims every year. The launch of survey for registering mine and ERW victims in Mayssan province was the best evidence, it has been recorded more than (5800) victims, and this is just a number in only

one province, so what the number will be, if taking all the other provinces in Iraq?, which are characterized by a high rate of contamination, and are living with these great numbers of mines and ordnances, and also has become an easy commodity for use by terrorists.

In spite of that, Iraq is now working hard to develop main solutions to this serious fundamental problem that have been identified by civil society. As a start, a Non-Technical Survey (NTS) project has been lunched in Thi-Qar province, which relied on the confirmation of suspected hazard areas, that registered from the impact survey (LIS), which conducted by VVAF Organization for the period 2004 to 2006. It was found that the proportion of information to the impact survey reduced significantly, after comparing it with the completed non-technical survey, as well as identifying new hazard areas, implemented by Iraqi staff in cooperation and coordination between DMA staff, the Ministry of Interior staff, non-governmental organizations and companies, working for a successful start to be implemented on all the contaminated provinces. The plan of our ministry in 2012 also includes completing NTS project in the three southern provinces, which are supervised by the Regional Mine Action Center-south (Basra, Mayssan and Muthanna).

Besides that, the Ministry of Environment undertook the responsibility of an important and serious national task, which is the awareness and protection of the citizens; on how to live safely in the unsafe mines and ERW contaminated areas, through intensifying awareness campaigns to reduce the injuries and mine risk education through coordination with all partners, especially the most polluted areas in the south and center of Iraq. All aiming to educate the people of those areas, and guide them on how to stay away from and not tamper with that silent deadly strong.

In conclusion, we would like to present our sincerest thanks to all who contributed in the conference to extend their cooperation in order to unify all national efforts to address the considerable challenges facing mine action in the world, and we hope to

exchange the experiences during this conference and for us to provide advice to the Iraqi experiences for progress and success.

thank you very much

**The delegation of the Republic of Iraq participating the Conference**