



Intervention by H.E. Sam Sotha
Secretary-General of Cambodian Mine Action
and Victim Assistance Authority
Head of Cambodia Delegation to the Standing Committee
Of the Ottawa Convention, Geneva, 30 January 2002

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to provide a short update on the status of the mine action environment in the Kingdom of Cambodia in my capacity as the appointed representative of the Royal Government for mine action.

The establishment of the Cambodian Mine Action Authority (CMAA) has been an important step forward for mine action in Cambodia. Its formation reflects the ongoing development and maturity of the mine action sector, and acknowledges the changes that have occurred within it over the past ten years, both domestically and internationally.

The CMAA has managed to achieve successes in several areas since its inception in September 2000, despite encountering some early difficulties. The Royal Government has made several appointments to the Secretariat and a Sub-Decree detailing the organisation and functions of the Authority has been brought into effect. Office accommodation has been allocated by the Royal Government for the CMAA's use, the recruitment of capable staff to carry out the Authority's many activities is the next step.

A project document has been signed with UNDP for the provision of support to mine action in Cambodia, which includes an advisor to assist with the development and implementation of new regulations and procedures. A consultant has been provided by a donation from the UK, through MAG, to assist with the

drafting of the National Mine Action Standards, and the Government of Germany has provided assistance to the development of the National Database. The EU has also provided and pledged in-kind and financial support.

Coordination mechanisms have been developed or strengthened, such as the Mine Action Coordination Committee, the Technical Advisory Board, and the Mine Action Advisory Board. The Mine Action Advisory Board provides a platform for discussions between the Royal Government of Cambodia and the donor community, and replaces the former Steering Committee of CMAC in that regard.

One of the most important issues to be addressed during the coming year is the development of a national mine action strategic plan. This strategic plan will define the long-term goals and objectives that must be achieved to enable Cambodia to become free from the constraints imposed by mines and UXO. It will draw heavily upon information gained during the Level 1 Survey currently underway to ensure that the most accurate and up to date information is used. Mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that priorities for clearance are consistent with national development priorities; this will be coordinated through existing provincial planning mechanisms.

Coordination of all mine action activities will continue to be one of the most important roles of the CMAA. The Authority will coordinate with Government Ministries and Departments, the international donor community, and relevant national and international organisations to ensure that the most effective and efficient use is made of resources, and that land allocation and land use issues are addressed. National Mine Action Standards based upon the International Mine Action Standards are being developed to ensure that safety, consistency and accuracy remain paramount in all mine action operations. An accreditation and licensing process will be developed which, together with a quality assurance and quality control process, will help to maintain the requisite standard.

The CMAA will also assist the Government in addressing its responsibilities vis-à-vis the various national and international instruments pertaining to mine action, and we will continue to advocate for a global ban on

anti-personnel landmines. Through Ministry of Social Relations, Labour, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation, the Ministries of Health and Veteran Affairs, and the Disability Action Council, we will engage with the various victim support agencies and organisations to ensure that the needs of mine victims continue to be addressed.

Last, but not least, a National Mine Action Database will be established in order to process, manage and disseminate information. This database, combined with a national mine action website and a public information plan, will ensure that accurate mine action information is available and accessible to all in an open and transparent manner.

Finally, Cambodia will be celebrating National Mine Awareness Day on 24 February which will include the observation of the 10-year anniversary of mine action activities in our country. Cambodia still has, on average, at least two new mine victims every day. So as we move into the second decade of mine action in the Kingdom, we are under no illusions that a great deal of work remains to be done. We are going to need the continuing assistance and support of the international community to help us do this work.

Thank you.