

**Standing Committee on
Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Mine Action Technologies¹
Geneva, 27-28 May 2009**

**Intervention on behalf of the UN Mine Action Team
Delivered by Gustavo Laurie (UNMAS)**

Thank you Co-Chair,

It gives me great pleasure to address you on behalf of the UN Mine Action Team, comprising 14 UN partners involved in mine action.²

(On Article 5 extension requests)

Last year, States Parties granted Article 5 extension requests to fifteen States Parties, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chad, Croatia, Jordan, Mozambique, Senegal, Yemen and Zimbabwe who all received support from the United Nations, particularly from UNDP, in preparing their requests. UNDP is committed to continuing its support to those countries in the implementation of their national plans for the fulfilment of their Article 5 obligations.

This year two States Parties currently receiving UN support in mine action: Tajikistan and Cambodia, have submitted Article 5 extension requests and UNDP will assist these countries in the preparation of their relevant national plans.

In addition, the whole UN Mine Action Teams with a wealth of experience in all aspects of mine action remains available and ready to provide its expert technical advice to the Analysis Group for the extension requests, as needed and requested.

Mr. Co-Chair, since the 9th Meeting of States Parties the United Nations has continued to provide support in mine action, including mine clearance, mine risk education and victim assistance to about 43 countries and territories³. This

¹ Co-Chairs: Argentina and Australia

² UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS), UN Office of Disarmament Affairs (ODA), UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women (OSAGI), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO) and World Bank.

³ Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Cambodia, Chad, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Georgia, Guinea Bissau, Iraq, Jordan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libya, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, occupied Palestinian territories, Russian Federation (Chechenya), Senegal, Serbia (Kosovo), Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uganda, Viet Nam, Western Sahara, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

assistance has been provided primarily through partnerships with governments, mine action operators, as well as international and non-governmental organizations.

(Completion Initiative)

The UNDP-led Completion Initiative aims to accelerate assistance to States Parties with a relatively modest anti-personnel mine problem to develop a national strategy to implement their Article 5 obligation within the deadline set by the Convention.

Although the UN has a role in encouraging and supporting governments, it is ultimately up to affected countries to request assistance and to come forward with the approach and the commitments that they wish to promote.

(Surveys)

Since the Ninth Meeting of States Parties (9MSP), the United Nations Mine Action Team has continued to contribute to the increased knowledge and understanding of the size and more importantly, the impact of the anti-personnel mine problem. (Technical surveys were finished in Tajikistan and Mauritania?) In Afghanistan, a country-wide polygon survey is taking place, which would define minefields within larger suspected hazardous areas. In Uganda a technical survey on the last known remaining mined area is ongoing. Angola completed a Landmine Impact Survey (LIS) in 2008, which has been disseminated to all mine action stakeholders in the country. In Cambodia, as a consequence of the extension granted to its clearance deadline, a Baseline Survey in the 21 most affected districts has been agreed.

(National Plans)

In Mozambique UNDP has assisted in reviewing and revising the National Mine Action Plan 2008-2014 in order to coincide with the Article 5 clearance deadline granted by the 9MSP. Similarly, Yemen is developing a comprehensive action plan encompassing the extension of the current phase project and the preparation for the period up to the extended Article 5 deadline (1 March 2015). Following the decision of the 9MSP with regard to its Article 5 extension request, Cambodia has directed their national plans to focus mine clearance in the 21 most affected districts. Sudan has prepared a Multi Year Plan with the specific aim of freeing the country of antipersonnel mines by 2014, which is the ten year deadline for Sudan.

(Mine Risk Education)

The United Nations supports a range of mine risk education (MRE) projects covering community liaison, public information, education and training and coordination activities in over 30 countries.

Our support on MRE included provision of technical and financial assistance to national programmes and NGOs in the affected countries as well as the development of new guidelines and training tools at the global level. Since the last intersessional meetings the UN, in addition to ongoing programmes, has provided emergency MRE response during the crisis in Georgia and Gaza. In more stable contexts such as Angola, Bosnia, Cambodia and Sudan UNICEF has supported integration of MRE into schools and other social and community based programmes.

At the global level UNICEF working closely with GICHD and other partners has recently finalized an MRE training manual based on MRE IMAS, the manual which contains 7 modules will assist field programmes, national authorities and NGOs in developing and implementing mine risk education activities in a more effective manner taking into consideration the specific needs and priorities of each individual context.

Furthermore, UNICEF together with GICHD and other partners have set up a new MRE Advisory Group at the global level that will oversee the status of MRE within mine action and provide advice and recommendations for improvement and modifications. The Advisory Group, as its first task, has agreed to look into the existing MRE IMAS and assist in its revision.

Mr. Co-Chair, we would like to highlight that MRE like the rest of mine action has evolved and become more professional in its approaches and methodologies and will continue to adapt to the needs of changing environment. MRE is no longer a simple awareness raising activity and should not be perceived as such. The range of activities that MRE practitioners now undertake include collecting data on hazardous areas, victims and incidents, conducting community liaison that facilitates communication between affected communities and mine action, undertaking advocacy at the grass-root level, and establishing linkages with other socio-economic and livelihood activities with an aim to reduce risks for the affected communities.

(Mine Action Technologies)

Technology

During the reporting period, UNMAS continue following-up on the most recent developments in the field of mine action technologies. While there continues to be a natural evolution of the development of technology designed to assist mine action (flails, tillers, metal detectors etc) development in the discriminating and dual sensor detection capabilities remain areas of increased relevance. Both aim

to reduce the wasted time excavating false alarms. Additionally, personal protective equipment is an area where there has been little change for some time but tests are currently being planned to evaluate new designs of face protection in order to make the conditions of the deminer more comfortable.

IMAS

With regard to the International Mine Action Standards, also in pursuit of increased effectiveness and efficiency in the clearance of mines and ERW, the continued attention on ways to release land from suspicion, before the commitment of expensive resources, has been discussed and trialed widely. Currently, the IMAS Review Board is reviewing the latest drafts of new standards which aim to explain more clearly the processes to release land more efficiently.

(Gender and Mine Action)

The United Nations MAT strongly believes that the inclusion of a **gender perspective** in all aspects of our work will increase effectiveness of policies and programmes.

UNMAT organized the Inter-Agency Regional Workshop on Gender Mainstreaming in Mine Action "Perspective from the Asia Field Programmes", held in Geneva on 27-29 March 2009. Participants came from mine action programmes in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The main objectives of the workshop were to support the preparation and/or implementation of tailor-made gender action plans and facilitate lessons learnt.

(Mine Action and Development)

The United Nations also works in support of further integrating mine action into national development or poverty reduction strategies. Some recent cases where progress have been made include in Mozambique where mine action has also been include in the Governments Plano de Accao para a Reducao da Pobreza Absoluta (PARPA II – Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty) as a cross cutting theme, emphasising the importance of addressing the mine contamination problem in the search for sustainable development.

In Ethiopia, between 2007 and 2008, a total 15,894,909 square metres was released by the Ethiopia Mine Action Office (EMAO) through integrated humanitarian demining operations to 131,300 people of the three target regions of Tigray, Afar and Somali for immediate productive use. According to EMAO statistical data on the socio-economic benefit of mine clearance operations, 98 % of the safe land released by EMAO was used by local residents for farming and/or grazing thus contributing to the increased food security and agricultural development. The remaining 2 % was utilized for housing of returnees and local inhabitants supporting their resettlement and rehabilitation as well as stabilization

of peace in the regions previously affected by the conflicts. Additionally, humanitarian demining carried out by EMAO is expected to contribute to the attainment of all eight key elements of Ethiopia's poverty reduction strategy. The UN has been assisting EMAO in demonstrating to Ethiopian government and international donors on how humanitarian demining has been contributing to the development outcomes of the country in order to further integrate humanitarian demining into the country's national development plan.

In Jordan mine action is factored into the district development planning process. Most importantly the National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation works with the Jordan Valley Authority and the Aqaba free zone in the development of their work plans. This is highly important, as the Valley is the main source of food for the Kingdom and in 2008 Aqaba over 1\$ billion worth of investment go into areas that were that were formally blocked by landmines. The UN supported the development and implementation of the 5-year National Mine Action Plan which helped establish these linkages and priorities.

In Uganda mine action helped in facilitating the return of 1,430,103 former IDPs primarily in northern Uganda. As former IDPs returned to their communities which were former battle areas, the demand for mine clearance and MRE as a prerequisite to return increased. The resulting mine clearance activities opened new roads to the return sites and freed agricultural land for productive purposes. In 2008 alone, about 55,000 square meters of land was released although the actual impact of such land released is bigger given the fact that neighbouring lands in cleared areas were likewise eventually cultivated.

Mine action activities have enabled the free movement of local populations in the north of Mauritania, by opening the main roads. These have increased trade exchange in the region, provided more opportunity in work and reduced poverty. Mainstreaming mine action in the development is a key issue raised by UN (UNDP) in many meeting in the mines affected countries. Therefore Mauritania used procedures and guidelines proposed by UN to integrate mine action into the development project. At the national level mine action is currently integrated in mine affected zones local development plans.

Thank you.