

Intervention by the Delegation of Thailand
during the Consideration of the General Status and Operation of the
Convention: Clearing mined areas (Agenda 10 (b))
at the 11th Meeting of States Parties to Mine Ban Convention
Tuesday, 29 November 2011 or Wednesday, 30 November 2011

Mr. President,
Distinguished delegates,

First of all, let me begin by updating you that since the 10th MSP in December 2010, Thailand has cleared an additional area of 3.6 square kilometers, reducing the total minefield left to be cleared to 545.4 square kilometers. Of all this cleared area, 1.1 square kilometers has already been identified as a safe area and handed over to the local authorities, while the remaining 2.5 square kilometers is waiting for the quality control before further handing-over. With these numbers, we cannot but accept that our clearance speed is rather slow and much more work needs to be done to enable us to complete total mine clearance by the extended deadline of December 2018.

However, as committed in our extension request, Thailand has consistently made an attempt to boost our clearance capacity to overcome all prevailing challenges and constraints facing our demining efforts. We have revised our demining policy and strategy by including more key elements – which are: (1) exploring new clearance methods; (2) intensification of fundraising activities; (3) expanding partnerships with new external partners, especially international and local demining NGOs; and, (4) enhancing cooperation with neighboring countries. I would like to inform the meeting of developments over the past year following this revised policy direction, as follows:

First, since traditional manual clearance is time-consuming, especially in the heavily-forested and hill areas, as with most minefields in Thailand, we have always favored employing new methodologies that are acceptable to both the local and international communities. This year, Thailand Mine Action Center (TMAC), in cooperation with NPA and APOPO, has conducted pilot projects on Land Release method with two Humanitarian Mine Action Units (HMAUs), one in Surin Province and another in Trad Province. We have learnt with satisfaction that these pilot projects are well received both by the implementing units and the local communities. With this positive response, as well as compliance with the

International Mine Action Standard, TMAC has included the Land Release method in Thailand's National Mine Action Standard which will serve as a new guideline for clearance. TMAC is now finalizing details of this method in order to ensure that with the introduction of the Land Release method, our clearance pace will be significantly expedited without compromising our safety standards.

Secondly, Thailand has not only welcomed a new clearance approach, but is also ready to consider new partners, especially NGOs with an extensive experience in demining. I am pleased to share with the meeting that in addition to NPA, APOPO is about to start its operation in Thailand soon. We are certain that with expansion and continuous cooperation with NGOs, Thailand's demining capacity will be further strengthened.

Thirdly, we realize that even though our national budget for demining has continuously increased over the past few years, it is still insufficient to significantly enhance our demining capacity. Therefore, we consistently pursue efforts to raise funds both at the domestic and international levels. Domestically, we aim to raise funds through awareness-raising activities, particularly among the civil society. In July this year, TMAC conducted two familiarization trips to bring stakeholders in mine action, as well as representatives from the media to visit mine clearance facilities. I am pleased to affirm that, although the government has introduced a budget cut across the board for the next budgetary year to accommodate flood rehabilitation, the budget allocated for TMAC for the year 2011-2012 was not cut, but even increased slightly. Internationally, we also aim to raise awareness of potential donors in order to boost international cooperation and assistance both financially and technically. We also plan a trip to bring the potential donors, as well as colleagues from neighbouring countries to visit our demining sites and facilities some time next year to explore the possibilities for future cooperation.

Fourthly, Thailand places high emphasis on cooperation with its neighboring countries as a key element contributing to a successful demining effort in the mine-suspected areas along its border. To translate this into action, TMAC paid a visit to the Cambodian mine action authority in January and is enthusiastic to further engage with Cambodia as well as other neighboring countries to work closely on this issue for the benefit of our people.

Last but not least, with the ultimate goal of no more casualties caused by this deadly weapon, all of our four HMAUs have consistently conducted mine risk education programmes as part of the risk assessment and reduction activities.

The programme targets the most at-risk population by providing necessary knowledge to students, teachers and villagers in the mine-affected communities. In 2011, the HMAUs have conducted mine risk education visits to 117 schools in 77 villages with the participation of 110,211 students, teachers and villagers. Moreover, every year TMAC hosts activities to commemorate the International Landmine Day on 4th April. The highlight of this year's activity was a media visit to one of the HMAUs field operation site and the landmine victims. We hope that the story which was nationally broadcasted will help raise public awareness on this important issue and will lead to additional support for our mine action activities.

Mr. President,

In closing, despite some key challenges, Thailand is confident that we are on the right track to fulfill our obligation to remove all landmines from our soil by the deadline in 2018. We would like to once again reiterate our full support to the humanitarian objective of the Convention and to the achievement of being a mine-free world.
