



Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Extension Request for Mine Clearance Deadline

Dr. Mohammad Daim Kakar

Director General, Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA)

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Excellencies, Distinguished colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my government's hope and expectation that at this meeting States Parties will approve Afghanistan's request for an extension to the deadline by which all known anti personnel mines will be removed from land under our jurisdiction. I would like to thank the many people responsible for preparation of the extension request, particularly staff of the MACCA, supported by UNMAS, and the seven Implementing Partners who are conducting the vast majority of clearance in Afghanistan. The extension request and accompanying workplan represents a collaborative effort and has been extremely well received by the Analysing Group and other observers.

The convention entered into force for Afghanistan on 1st March 2003, but it must be recognized and noted that this was not the beginning of mine action in Afghanistan. The national database indicates that prior to 1st March 2003 almost 16,000 Afghans had already been killed or injured by mines and UXO, though it is likely the actual figure is much higher due to difficulties in reporting over such a vast country with limited infrastructure. Almost 300 sq km of minefield and 550 sq km of UXO contaminated land had been cleared and 280,000 mines and almost 300,000 items of UXO had been destroyed. None-the-less vast areas were still suspected to contain mines.

Immediately after signing, Afghanistan commenced implementation of the Landmine Impact Survey which was completed at the end of 2004. Afghanistan considers the results of this survey to be the original article 5 challenge; 3,527 anti personnel hazardous areas covering 445.6 sq km were impacting 1,914 communities. In addition 978 anti tank/UXO contaminated areas covering 270 sq

km were impacting another 657 communities. Accidents reached a high point in 2001 when over 2000 people were killed or injured due to mines and UXO. Many large scale development and infrastructure projects were hampered by the presence of mines.

Since 2003 considerable progress has been made despite an additional three and a half thousand contaminated areas being added to the original challenge, as survey continued alongside clearance. In total 1,200 sq km of anti personnel and anti tank mine and UXO contaminated area has been cleared, 775,000 anti personnel mines, 31,000 anti tank mines, 6.4 million items of UXO and 3 million small arms ammunition have been destroyed. Over 13 and a half million people have received MRE. The accident rate has dropped to 409 in 2011. National standards have been established, coordination has improved, new technologies have been introduced, large development projects have been supported, MRE is part of the national curriculum, the rights of people with disabilities are recognized, the programme is nationalized and my government is taking more and more responsibility for the sector.

Alongside this success story the Afghan mine action programme has faced multiple challenges, all of which have impeded compliance with the treaty obligation to completely remove all known anti-personnel minefields within 10 years of ratification. Despite great and hugely appreciated support from the international community the resources provided have not matched the magnitude of contamination. Security and ongoing conflict has slowed down clearance in some areas and completely halted it in others. The presence of high priority anti-tank minefields has meant the programme has not been able to focus

solely on the anti-personnel mine threat. Indiscriminate use of mines and a lack of records and maps has been a major obstacle to timely clearance. As a result of increased access and population movements previously unreported minefields have been reported, as I mentioned before, adding three and a half thousand new records to the database since 2003.

As a result, 531.87 sq km of anti personnel and anti tank mine and UXO contaminated areas are still impacting 1,537 communities equating to 4.7% of the communities. 670,000 Afghans still live within 500m of a minefield. There are currently 43 important development projects which will require some mine action intervention. On average 42 people are still killed or injured every month.

The work plan submitted as part of the extension request will see the removal of the remaining 4,442 anti personnel and anti tank mine and UXO hazards by March 2023. Because some anti-tank minefields and/or UXO contaminated areas are impacting communities more than some anti-personnel minefields all types of contamination have been considered in the plan to ensure all impacted Afghan communities are addressed with the appropriate urgency. These 4,442 hazards have been divided into 308 projects which have subsequently been prioritized for clearance based on criteria such as accident data, blockage type, proximity to community centres, impact on development and the Survey Action Centre's victim prediction model. Completion of these 308 projects in priority order will be undertaken over the next ten years, coinciding with the Transformation Decade and Towards Self Reliance papers presented in Tokyo in the summer. In addition a nationwide non technical survey of all 32,448 communities in Afghanistan (impacted and not recorded as impacted) has already commenced

and will be completed in the first year of the extension request. The work plan will be updated on a 6 monthly basis to take into account information generated by this survey and ongoing survey throughout the extension request.

The total budget for clearance and other vital functions such as coordination, survey, EOD work and MRE is \$618.6 million. The work plan committee allowed for a 6% year on year reduction of funding, anticipating reduced international support for Afghanistan post 2014. The completion of the work plan is a simple cost versus time function; if sufficient funds are not secured the plan will fail, if higher than anticipated funds are received the job will be completed within a shorter timeframe.

Afghanistan has the capacity and expertise, in a fully nationalized programme to deliver the work plan. I encourage you to approve the extension request and appeal to you to support us financially.

Many thanks