



Republic of Mozambique

***Statement by H.E. Mr. Pedro Comissário,
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Mozambique to UNOG
13th Meeting of States Parties to the APMBC
International Cooperation and Assistance under the
Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention***

Geneva, 3 December 2013

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I wish to express my warmest congratulations to you, Mr. President, distinguished Ambassador Boudjemaa Delmi, of Algeria, upon your election by acclamation to preside over our deliberations. Ambassador, you are well known and highly regarded for your diplomatic acumen and for your outstanding professional skills. Moreover, you come from Algeria, a country that has played a crucial role in the liberation of Mozambique, in particular, and of Africa at large. Therefore we are firmly confident that under your presidency, the 13 MSP will be crowned with success. Mozambique looks forward to working with you very closely, Mr. President, as we prepare for the Maputo Review Conference next year.

I would also like to extend my congratulations to yet another friend, a distinguished diplomat from Slovenia, Ambassador Matjaz Kovacič for the superb leadership skills with which he presided over the deliberations of the 12 MSP. I have been working closely with Ambassador Matjaz Kovaič recently and I have learned to admire his brilliant grasp of and commitment to the issues related to the Ottawa Convention, his balanced judgment and his pragmatism. Whatever the future has in store for him, I look forward to seeing

him in Maputo in his capacity as counsellor and friend of Mozambique and former President of the MSP.

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I warmly welcome this initiative aimed at sharing good practices and good lessons by highlighting the positive aspects and outcomes of the strategic partnership between Norway and Mozambique in the area of Mine Action. International Cooperation and Assistance is, indeed, a subject that is very relevant to Mozambique. I wish to start by giving you a short background and a brief history of mine action in Mozambique.

Landmine contamination in Mozambique is a legacy of both our struggle for independence and later of the subsequent war of destabilization from 1976 to 1992.

During these two conflicts, landmines were widely used and, unfortunately, almost no maps were maintained of where landmines were placed. As a result, Mozambique was held as one of the worst landmine-affected countries in the world.

Recognizing the hindrance to peace, recovery and development posed by landmines, the Government of Mozambique's response was immediate and swift. Landmines and demining were specifically included in Protocol VI of the Rome General Peace Agreement that was signed in 1992.

In 1993, humanitarian Mine Action started under the auspices of the UN Peacekeeping Operation. Mozambique was an early supporter of the Ottawa Process to ban anti-personnel mines and was one of the first States to join the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in 1997. With the entry into force of the Convention, Mozambique established the National Demining Institute in 1999 to coordinate mine action in Mozambique. From our perspective,

landmines have a very clear link to our peace process and our national development program. Therefore, Mine Action was included as a cross cutting issue in the Government's strategy for poverty reduction, PARPA, or *Plano de Acção para a Redução da Pobreza*.

Due to our relative early start, humanitarian mine action was a learning process in Mozambique. As the mine action community learned lessons from Mozambique, the Government also had their own learning process on coordination, ownership and oversight. It was not always an easy process. We faced many challenges and had our dark days. A particular challenge came as we neared our original Article 5 deadline for mine clearance in 2009.

In the few years before the original deadline, we faced difficulties and lost our way for several reasons. First, the 2001 Landmine Impact Survey of Mozambique had unfortunately proven to be not as reliable a document for planning as originally expected. Second, we must recognize that, at that time, there were inadequacies in information management, the Quality Assurance system and the government's oversight.

The Political will was there, but without the basic tools for strategic management, we were not clear of what remained to be done and it seemed as if we lost our strategic vision on how to arrive at our goal of a mine-free Mozambique. As a result, some partners and donors lost faith and reduced drastically their support for the mine action program in Mozambique.

The Article 5 extension request process provided us with the opportunity to re-focus ourselves on the national mine action program.

A baseline assessment was conducted to confirm how much landmine suspected areas remained to be done. A district-by-district approach, called '*the Mine Free District Process*' was adopted to ensure that all reasonable effort was made to identify and record suspected areas. These efforts became the basis for Mozambique's 2008 extension request under Article 5 of the Convention and the 2008-2014 National Mine Action Plan. However, in approving Mozambique extension request, the 9th Meeting of States Parties

highlighted one of our greatest challenges, and noted in its decision that:

“While the plan presented in Mozambique’s request is workable and ambitious, its success is contingent upon reversing a downward trend in donor support for Mozambique in order to increase demining capacity to the level needed to complete implementation by the end of the requested extension period.”

This is where we come to the critical role of partnership for international cooperation and assistance. Mozambique’s turnaround would have not been possible without the cooperation and assistance of our partners. Luckily, Mozambique still had some.

The UNDP in their mandate to build national capacity has stuck with the National Demining Institute from the beginning, through the good days and challenging time. But without funding and international support, the UNDP could not fulfill its mandate.

Norway is an old partner of Mozambique and we work together in many areas. Actually, their support to our country and to our people started during our liberation struggle. Today, Norway is also a strong ally in our war against landmines. This support in the area of mine action was cemented in the bilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Mozambique and Norway for the implementation of Mozambique’s 2008 to 2014 Mine Action Plan.

The MOU was an instrument to strengthen and develop the relations between our respective Governments and to establish an overall framework for our cooperation in support of the National Mine Action Plan that will result in a mine-free Mozambique by the end of 2014. As outlined in the MOU, the Government of Mozambique's vision and main objectives were to:

- Declare Mozambique as a country that is in compliance with Article 5.1 of the Mine Ban Convention
- Reduce the number of new landmine victims and release areas for productive use, in support of socio-economic development

- Support the full implementation of the Mine Ban Convention by all States Parties.

The MOU notes that Mozambique and Norway's commitment in promoting humanitarian disarmament, international law, human rights and good governance, is vital for achieving the above objectives, and forms the basis of this cooperation.

I will allow my colleague to highlight in more detail the areas of cooperation that are included in the MOU. But allow me to close my statement by emphasizing that Mozambique would not be in the position it has managed to achieve if it were not for the steadfast partnership we have with Norway.

The MOU with Norway and the support we received from the UNDP were critical to our ability to overcome the challenge highlighted by the 9th Meeting of States Parties, when it approved Mozambique's extension request.

Norway's bilateral cooperation in this field, which included technical and financial support, resulted in the improvement of the overall confidence in our national mine action plan and it helped considerably to reverse the downward trend in donor support. Indeed, it helped to increase the demining capacity to the required level to complete the mine clearance and further improve the implementation of the Ottawa Convention.

I wish to conclude my remarks by expressing the heartfelt gratitude of the Government and the People of Mozambique for the excellent partnership and cooperation we have had over the years with the People and Government of Norway.

I thank you, Mr. President!

Geneva, 3 December 2013.