



República de Moçambique

**STATEMENT OF MOZAMBIQUE  
AT THE 14<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF STATE PARTIES  
OF THE OTTAWA CONVENTION**

*Delivered by*

**His Excellency Mr. Pedro Comissário,  
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary  
Permanent Representative to the United Nations  
and other International Organizations in Geneva  
Head of Delegation**

*Geneva, 02 December 2015*

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Mozambican delegation, I warmly congratulate you on your election as the President of the 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the States Parties (MSP). We are impressed by the extraordinary dynamism that you have brought to bear on the work of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. We extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau who have been working tirelessly with you.

Mr. President,

In 1999, Mozambique had the honour to host, in Maputo, the first MSP of Convention. Fifteen years on, i.e., in 2014, we received, in our territory, Member states, observers and international organizations for the Third Review Conference.

We remind ourselves of these two landmark dates because the life of our Convention has been closely connected to our national efforts to make Mozambique a country free of landmines. As a matter of fact, at the time of the first MSP, we were one of the most mine-affected countries on earth. Landmines from the time of our liberation struggle compounded by those of war of Apartheid destabilization had made the land mine situation in our country one of the worst in the world.

In light of this picture, demining became a key priority in Mozambique. It was a vital matter of peace and development. Peace because landmines are a silent war. They kill and maim long after peace agreements have been signed, after conventional weapons have fallen silent and after a formal armed conflict has stopped.

Development because as long as the land is infested by mines, our people cannot engage themselves in agriculture; they cannot produce and endeavor for the betterment of their lives. Indeed, we were aware of the clear and present danger that mines posed not

only to the safety of citizens, but also to the socio-economic livelihood of the communities and populations in the country.

It was in this context that, together with our partners that included states, international organizations and civil society, the Government of Mozambique conceived an ambitious vision which came to be embodied in a realistic program aimed at demining the country in as shorter period of time as feasible. Such resolve resulted in the Mine Action Program and the implementation of the National Plan for Mine Action 2008-2014.

The launching of this demining program was a milestone in our determination to rid the country of the scourge of mines and of guaranteeing a safe and sound environment for the affected communities. In this connection, the year 2014, when we met in Maputo, marked the beginning of the end of our demining program.

Mr. President,

At this 14<sup>th</sup> session of the MSP, I have been instructed by my Government to re-affirm, before this august forum and to the international community at large, that Mozambique has concluded its demining program. From one of the 5 most mine-affected countries in the world, we are happy to declare our country a territory free of land mines, in full compliance of Article 5 of the Ottawa Convention. This is also in keeping with the Maputo+15 Declaration of 2014 when together we pledged: "We are committed to comply and complete." Mozambique has, then, complied and completed.

The success of the National Plan for Mine Action 2008-2014 demining activities can be measured, in general terms, as follows: the release of three thousand, three hundred thirty hazardous areas, measuring approximately fifty-five million square meters of land. Over ninety thousand ERW-Mines were recovered and destroyed.

We thank all the delegations that have praised and congratulated Mozambique for this important achievement. But let us not forget that this is our collective victory, our common accomplishment because it is premised on a strong and long and loyal partnership.

Mr. President,

We wish to recall that the humanitarian mine action effort that has just been concluded began more than 20 years ago. Studies, at the time, had suggested that, at the pace the demining process was unfolding, the landmine-clearing operations would last between 47 to 160 years to cover the whole territory of Mozambique. Such was the daunting task before us! Fortunately, it did not take that long to clear Mozambique of all mined areas. But neither was it possible to achieve the result within the legal 10 year deadline, as prescribed under Article 5 of the Convention.

Mozambique, therefore, had to request, also under the provisions of the same Convention, a total of two extensions that were granted. The first extension request in 2008 was for a period of five years and the second one in 2013, for a period of 10 months, from 1 March 2014 until 31 December 2014. In this exercise, Mozambique always acted in good faith and strove to be highly transparent. We kept the ISU, the article 5 Committee and State Parties informed on the progress through regular reports and updates. I would like to draw your attention that more details on Mozambique's compliance efforts are contained in the declaration of compliance that was submitted to the Article 5 Committee.

Mr. President,

We consider that Mozambique's compliance with article 5 of the Mine Ban Convention constitutes a significant milestone and a meaningful contribution to the global efforts towards the eradication of anti-personnel mines and enhancement of the international humanitarian disarmament instruments. It bears testimony to the strong commitment of our Government and its partners to honor its obligations under the Nairobi, Cartagena and Maputo Action Plans.

The success story of the demining action in our country was largely due to the tireless commitment and political will of the people and Government of Mozambique and that of the International Community to abide by the Mine Ban Convention. It also embodies our determination in joining the global movement for the eradication of anti-personnel mines and consequent commitment to

observe best practices in coordination of demining activities and promoting a systematic interaction with demining organizations and affected communities.

In this context, my delegation wishes to advise that, in the unlikely event that previously unknown mined areas are discovered, in the future, Mozambique will be totally transparent and will be guided by the letter and spirit of the Ottawa Convention. In such a scenario the following steps would have to be taken forthwith:

First, we would immediately inform all States Parties reporting such mined areas in accordance with Article 7 of the Ottawa Convention and share such information through any other means such as the formal and informal meetings of the Convention.

Second, we would ensure the effective exclusion of civilians in accordance with Article 5 and destroy all anti-personnel mines in the mined area as soon as possible. If Mozambique is unable to destroy or ensure the destruction of all anti-personnel mines, in the mined area, before the next Meeting of the Convention, it would submit a request for an extended deadline, which should be as short as possible, to the next Meeting of the Convention in accordance with our obligations under Article 5 and the process for submission of extension requests.

Mr. President,

As we rejoice for this victory, we must be aware of the possible challenges of residual contamination that may lie ahead. We need to establish a functional residual contamination response mechanism. One cannot completely rule out the possibility of occurrence of isolated cases of unidentified mines or other explosive devices, across the country, since the two armed conflicts that ravaged the country were protracted in nature and contamination of ERW-mines was widespread and occurred in an arbitrary manner.

The Government's strategy to meet these challenges is based on the technical training of national cadres to carry out the tasks of residual nature, the destruction of any explosive devices when necessary and in mobilizing resources. Training programs to

perform those residual tasks will target, preferably, the Police and the Military.

We believe that with your cooperation and involvement in the creation of a national capacity and technical conditions for management of residual contamination, we will succeed, once again, in ensuring that even the residual mines cease to exist and that no citizen will fall again victim of anti-personnel mines.

At this juncture, my Government would like to advance two ideas for the post-clearance period in the country:

First, Mozambique has gained extensive experience in the field of humanitarian demining and disarmament. Therefore, we stand ready and willing to share this wealth of knowledge and experience with other countries.

Second, the country faces the challenge of integrating the large number of deminers into alternative career lines. The integration process will require support and resources from the international partners in providing alternative vocational trainings and skills development.

Mr. President,

Mozambique estimates the overall cost of demining activities in our country at just over 220 million US dollars. This amount was financed by international cooperation partners and by our Government. International cooperation based on a sense of shared commitment was crucial for the success we are savoring today. Therefore, I wish to take this opportunity to wholeheartedly express, on behalf of our people and Government, our profound appreciation and gratitude to the International Community and to individual States and organizations for their unwavering support that made possible the completion of our work under article 5 of the Ottawa Convention.

I thank you, Mr. President!