

Statement by the Delegation of Thailand
Lt. Gen. Prasopchai Kongburan
Director-General of the Thailand Mine Action Center
15th Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
29 September 2016, Santiago Chile

Agenda 10 (b): Clearing Mined Areas

Mr. President,

The Thai Delegation thanks the chair and members of the Committee on Article 5 Implementation for their presentation of the committee's activities throughout the past year. We commend the proactive, inclusive and outreaching approach by which Committee has taken to carry out its mandate. We also take due note of the Committee's conclusions and recommendations on our implementation of mine clearance obligation in accordance with Article 5.

As a State Party to the Convention, Thailand views mine clearance as our top obligation. Since Thailand became party to the Convention, we have taken seriously our obligation to remove and dispose of all landmines under our soil, so as to become a mine-free country as soon as possible.

We continue to make progress year by year with the hard work of both government agencies, in particular the Thailand Mine Action Center (TMAC), and many other domestic and international non-governmental organisations. Currently, the size of suspected hazardous areas (SHA) in Thailand stands at approximately 422 square kilometres, comparing to over 2,500 square kilometres 15 years ago.

During the course of this year, TMAC has successfully handed over safe areas of 31.6 square kilometres in nine provinces, among which two previously affected provinces, Chaing Rai and Nan, have been declared mine-free areas.

More than 70% of our remaining SHA or approximately 360 square kilometres forms part of the areas to be demarcated between Thailand and our neighbouring countries - Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar - through respective bilateral mechanisms. The possibility of complete survey in those boundary areas remains limited and depends upon the progress of the boundary demarcation process. Nevertheless, for SHA outside those areas to be demarcated, Thailand intends to finalize mine clearance process within our extended deadline of 1 November 2018.

Mr. President,

Thailand believes that humanitarian mine action should be inclusive and opened to all stakeholders. This has led the Thailand Mine Action Center to reach out to provincial authorities and local communities in mine-contaminated areas. A number of meetings between TMAC officials and members of local communities were organised to gather first-hand information. Such dialogue also helps raise awareness and create sense of ownership among the locals which in turn will accelerate mine clearance in their areas.

In addition, breadth and depth of information gathered from the locals significantly enhance efficiency of the non-technical survey process to be more accurate and economic.

Mr. President,

This year, Thailand in cooperation with the Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) has completed a pilot project to re-survey suspected contaminated areas in Ubonratchathani Province, using the "Evidence-Based Survey (EBS)" technique which put more emphasis on information management and non-technical survey.

The results mark an important step in the consideration of our mine-clearance methodology. The re-survey led TMAC to draw a conclusion that among the overall 422 square kilometres of remaining SHA, only less than 20% would be confirmed hazardous areas (CHA). TMAC has recently begun to apply this technique to other SHA in Thailand. We are optimistic that this positive development will accelerate the progress of mine clearance in the country.

In addition, TMAC is also updating our National Mine Action Standard (NMAS) to ensure its compliance with the International Mine Action Standard (IMAS). My delegation wishes to thank the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining (GICDH) and the Norwegian People's Aid for their invaluable technical supports during the past years.

On a final note, we thank the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) for the continued supports and thank its Director for his visit to Thailand in August this year to discuss various issues, including the process of submitting a request for extension of our mine clearance deadline.

Thailand would like to take this opportunity to inform the meeting that we have started preparing our second extension request to be submitted for your consideration at the 16th Meeting of States Parties next year in Vienna. We look forward to your support and to working with the Committee on Article 5 Implementation, the ISU, as well as NGO partners on this matter.

Thank you.