



The Eighteenth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

Statement by Sri Lanka

Agenda Item 9 b) Clearing mined areas: conclusions and recommendations related to the mandate of the Committee on Article 5 Implementation

Mr. President,

At the outset, Sri Lanka would like to congratulate and thank Canada as the Chair of this Committee for your untiring efforts together with Austria, Norway and Zambia for implementation of the Art. 5 of the Convention. Sri Lanka will be pleased to join the Article 5 Implementation Committee for the years 2021 and 2022 exemplifying Sri Lanka's strong commitment to advancing as well as contributing to the universal realisation of the salutary objectives of the Convention.

Mr. President,

For Sri Lanka, this conference represents an important opportunity to present an outline of the progress we have made in mine action and the repertoire of experience gained by way of lessons learnt and best practices, as well as the path ahead in the direction of achieving mine-free status, with the continued support of our partners and implementing agencies.

It is important in this context to acknowledge the assistance provided by Norway, USA, Canada, China, EU, Australia and other partners and agencies, to effectively take forward the mine action programme in Sri Lanka.

The three decade-long conflict in Sri Lanka left many areas in the Northern and Eastern parts of the country contaminated by anti-personnel mines and it was initially feared that it would take an extensive period of time for Sri Lanka to clear the contaminated land which stood originally at 22,200,364 square meters of land as a suspected or known contaminated area. Since the aftermath of the conflict, mine clearance was a primary concern for Sri Lanka and in response; the National Mine Action Programme was launched in 2002 with the support of the international community. Humanitarian demining in Sri Lanka by the Sri Lanka Army was continuing even when the conflict was ongoing as early as in 2002 and even during the height of the conflict between 2005-2009 to ensure safe resettlement of displaced people at the earliest.

Sri Lanka remains committed to the fulfilment of its obligations under Article Five of the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention. Since the Fourth Review Conference to the APMBC, hazards covering 1,290 km² areas were cleared in Sri Lanka. All areas known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines have been marked with prominently displayed warning signs in Sinhala, Tamil and English. Warning signs are replaced and maintained on a regular basis

While Sri Lanka has set the target of becoming mine – free by 2020, through an accelerated national strategy, various practical constrains, including inadequate funding has delayed the achievement of the target. We remain committed on the path to make Sri Lanka landmines-

free through sustained national efforts, focusing on mine clearance, resettlement of affected persons, mine risk reduction and victim assistance. 24 Sq.km has been newly identified as a contaminated area in the year 2015 to the end of Oct 2020 and recorded in the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database. Needless to say, the unprecedented circumstances of the pandemic has also had a negative impact on the progress of mine clearance in affected areas.

As at November 2020, it is reported that 813,222 Anti-Personal Mines have been destroyed. Sri Lanka possessed 32,831 Stockpiled Anti-Personal Mines of which a demolition plan has been prepared for 12,000 Stockpiled Anti-Personal Mines over a period of 3 years ending in 2020. The balance 20,831 Stockpiled Anti-Personal Mines will be used for training purposes.

Sri Lanka appreciates the continued assistance from development partners in achieving this target at the earliest. Sri Lanka is ready to present a detailed project proposal outlining its funding needs and expected results to those interested in supporting its efforts to complete implementation of Article 5 obligations on mine clearance. It is also important to establish a suitable demobilization process for employed local personnel and for Humanitarian Demining Unit of the Sri Lanka Army to address residual contamination.

The NMAC has allocated Rs 4 Million with the view to conduct MRE activities in the mine affected areas with the support of Local and International Mine Action Operators who are active in Sri Lanka. However, due to the depletion of funds to the UNICEF for MRE activities, the frequency of the MRE activities have been drastically reduced yet the need for such activities is a prime requirement in order to prevent mine related incidents in those areas. If the required level of funds be provided to mine action operators through NMAC, the resumption of MRE which is a timely requirement would be possible and would be of great assistance to the community.

In conclusion Mr. President, Sri Lanka will continue to make steady progress towards the goal of mine free status and stands ready to share our experiences and best practices to help countries in de-mining tasks.