



ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan's Statement on Clearance – Article Five

Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention

18th Meeting of States Parties to the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention

16-20 November 2020

Virtual

Excellencies,

Distinguished Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Afghan delegation, I am honored to present an update on implementation of the Article Five of the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention.

Afghanistan still remains one of the most heavily contaminated countries in the world. A total of 3,724 recorded hazardous areas, covering 583 sq.km remains contaminated by AP, AV mines, Improvised Mines and Explosive Remnants of War. They continue to affect over 1500 communities, 259 districts, in all 34 provinces of the country. Based on the AP-MBT extension request plan, Afghanistan is planning to clear all these contaminated areas by the end of March 2023.

In addition to 583 sq.km contaminated areas that are recorded in the national database, there is 303 Initially Hazardous Areas covering approximately 269 sq.km contaminated by Improvised Mines and Explosive Remnants of War and 623sq.km of High Explosive Training Ranges from NATO forces that all need clearance.

Unfortunately, remnants of the ongoing armed conflicts add to scale of contamination though the actual extent of new contamination is not yet fully determined. Looking to the past twelve months, we know that on average some 100 Afghan civilians lose their lives or get injured by landmines, ERW

and Improvised Mines every month, which is one of the highest casualty rates in the world. It is worth mentioning that around 57 % of the civilian accidents are caused by improvised mines, 42.4% by ERW and some 0.7% by industrial landmines. Sadly, children comprise 48 percent of civilian casualties caused by mines and ERW.

To address this increasing challenge and in order to effectively utilize the humanitarian mine action capacity for survey and clearance of Improvised Mines, one of the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) implementing partners has established nine clearance teams and 13 survey teams capable of dealing with Improvised Mines since 2019 and they are delivering in most affected provinces.

Afghanistan has a comprehensive work plan to achieve mine-free status by 2023. We are now into the eight year of the Extension Work Plan. Collectively we have achieved only 57% of the projected clearance target we had set for these seven years, 2013 – 2019. For the first six months of the operational year of 2020 (April – September), only 19% of the yearly clearance target has been achieved. The reasons for not achieving the clearance target was associated with factors such as funding shortfall, insecurity, access prevention by anti-government elements and continually adding the remaining un-cleared balance of previous years to subsequent years.

Looking at the funding status for year 2020 and recent years, and assuming if the funding status will remain similar till 2023, it is obvious that we will neither be able to meet the clearance target for the current year nor we will achieve our Article Five clearance goal by 2023. Having said that, I regret to let you know that we shall need to request for another five-year extension of Afghanistan's Article Five deadline. We shall start with preparation of the extension request as of early 2021 and will present it to the state parties a year before of the deadline.

Regarding the Action # 3 of the Oslo Action Plan, it is worth mentioning that Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming is considered as a vital priority for the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan. Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming is one of the four goals of the National Mine Action Strategic Plan to ensure the diverse needs and experiences of people in affected communities are captured.

On a final note, on behalf of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, I would like to express our gratitude for the contributions of all donors and partners. Thank you very much