

Fourth Meeting of States Parties to the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention
Geneva, 16-20 September 2002

***Informal Consultations on International Cooperation and Assistance:
Mine Clearance, Awareness and Mine Action Technologies***
Mr. Martin Barber, Chief, United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)

Mr. President, Co-Chairs, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to commend the Co-Chairs for the tremendous work they have done to ensure the success of the Standing Committee and the creative ways they have chosen to address the issues. There is no doubt that without their dedication and commitment, we would not have made such progress in assessing the implementation of the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention in the field of mine clearance, mine awareness and mine action technologies.

One of the most innovative initiatives of the Co-Chairs was the introduction of a session dedicated to in-depth analysis of a mine-affected country and its mine action programme. Specialists from Afghanistan and Mozambique helped us better understand the nature of the challenges they faced in the field. These two mine action programmes are both mature, but they operate in different contexts and illustrate different ways of conducting mine action effectively. The Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan (MAPA) was the international community's first attempt to address the humanitarian effects of landmines. Since 1989, it has grown into an entity that works in partnership with 9 local and 6 international NGOs and employs more than 6,000 Afghans. For the most part, MAPA has operated in a country without proper government structures, amidst an on-going armed conflict. On the other hand, Mozambique has followed a more 'traditional' mine action approach, incorporating mine action into its overall developmental plans. A landmine impact survey was conducted. Then a national mine action strategy was developed to define the priority areas of work. This strategy is being implemented by national mine action structures with the support of donor countries, the United Nations and several NGOs. One important lesson learned from Afghanistan and Mozambique is the importance of effective coordination between Government, the UN, non-governmental organizations and other operators.

We heard Bob Eaton's follow-up presentation, on behalf of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), on units of measurement for mine action. At the Standing Committee meetings in January 2002, the ICBL made thought-provoking presentations seeking to answer questions about the status of mine action such as : What has been done ? How much did it cost ? What's left to be done ? How much will it cost ? I think it surprised everyone to discover how hard it is to obtain a clear and quantifiable global picture of the work that has been done to date as compared to the work left to be done and the cost to carry it to completion. In the *United Nations Mine Action Strategy for 2001-2005*, we have committed ourselves to supporting the conduct of 15 Landmine Impact Surveys. As Bob mentioned, these surveys are important tools to obtain data about a country's mine action problem at a given time. In addition, we are developing, in collaboration with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), a reporting template which will enable reports from field programmes to be semi-automatically generated through the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) and disseminated through the electronic mine information network (E-MINE).

This year, we discussed the value-added, the implementation and the translation of the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), developed under a partnership arrangement between the UN and the GICHD. IMAS represent a collection of best practices in diverse areas of mine action; their development is an on-going process as they are constantly reviewed and updated. Further to discussions held with Programme Managers, UN agencies, NGOs and other implementing partners, the translation of an extended glossary, which will include IMAS 4.10 Glossary of mine action terms and definitions and IMAS 1.10 application of IMAS, into all the UN official languages is expected to be completed by the end of 2002. A translation of the extended glossary will also be produced in those languages used in multiple programmes in mine-affected countries which are not official languages of the United Nations, such as Portuguese. Other parts of IMAS will be translated into languages used in mine-affected countries in the context of the development of national standards, as required by national programme directors, and subject to the availability of funds.

It is important to note that the standards are only as valuable as their contribution to the safe conduct of mine action. They are a reference and a guide, not a substitute to national standards and SOPs. Only national standards and SOPs can be legally-binding and reflect the realities of the different environments in which we work. We were pleased to hear that Cambodia has almost completed the translation of the adopted IMAS. We strongly encourage mine action organizations to keep challenging IMAS and analyzing their application in the field since it can only lead to improvements. In fact, any organization that wishes to suggest a review of any specific standards, can request the Review Board to do so at any time.

We have also talked about being prepared in case of humanitarian emergencies. Our colleagues at UNHCR have expressed concern about the movement of refugees and the long lead-time before mine risk education and mine clearance takes place in those situations. Therefore, the United Nations has developed a Rapid Response Plan to meet the requirements of emergency situations; the final draft of the plan was recently distributed to mine action partners. The plan consists of two fixed components—a Fact Finding Team and a Coordination Team—and a number of optional capabilities (including emergency survey, Manual/Dog Mine detection teams, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team, Mechanical equipment and Mine Risk Education) that can be deployed depending on the situation.

The issue of resource mobilization is another important one. We welcome the focus of this issue in the non-paper produced by Norway, and will be pleased to collaborate with the proposed Contact Group. We think it will be important to make maximum use of the existing mechanisms for coordination of resource mobilization, such as the Mine Action Support Group, the donor investment database, and the portfolio of mine-related projects.

In conclusion, thanks to the Co-Chairs. We were able to discuss a broad range of issues in a very comprehensive way and to identify potential ways forward. The five thematic areas identified in the Final Report provide a realistic basis for next year's Standing Committee Work Programme. I have full confidence that next year's Co-Chairs will be as creative and dynamic as this year's Co-Chairs in leading our work and reaffirm the UN's commitment to support them fully.