

Delegation of Austria
Agenda item "Assistance and Cooperation"

At the beginning of November this year, we have concluded an interministerial process on a new strategy for the Austrian mine action cooperation and assistance until 2009. This strategy has been elaborated and approved the political section and the department for humanitarian assistance at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, as well as the Austrian Development Agency.

The new strategy comprises of the following main elements

- 1) increased geographical and thematic focus of Austrian mine action programs,
- 2) explicit link with the implementation of the Convention on the basis of the Nairobi Action Plan,
- 3) increased integration of mine action into Austrian bilateral development cooperation programs, where this is appropriate,
- 4) increased coordination with other mine action efforts, in particular the EC Mine Action Strategy.

Geographically, we will focus on two mine affected regions:

- South Eastern Europe, in support of the regional initiative "SSE Mine Free by 2009". Of Austrian mine action projects in SEE, we are aiming to allocate approx: 80% for mine clearance and 20% for victim assistance and MRE.
- The second geographical focus, which we are aiming to develop further in the coming years, will be African States Parties, in which Austria has development cooperation programs, in particular in Mozambique, Ethiopia and Uganda, as well as Senegal, Rwanda, Burundi and Zimbabwe. Approx. 60% of mine action projects in Africa will be in the area of mine clearance and 40 % in the area of victim assistance and MRE.

We are exploring, in particular, the idea of increased integration of MRE into the education sector of bilateral programs, as well as victim assistance into health sector programs. This is consistent with the new Austrian law regulating development assistance, which requires us to put a particular emphasis on the needs and rights of people with disabilities.

The MFA budget for 2006 foresees a special mine action budget of 1,5 Mio Euro. This amount is in addition to the Austrian share of the European Commission mine action efforts. The MFA mine action budget is complemented by efforts and other contributions from the public sector, such as the MoD, which has conducted demining operations in Albania in the past few years or, for example, by the province of Upper Austria, which is funding a victim assistance and MRE project in Sri Lanka with an amount of 315.000 Euro.

This shows that the linking of all actors and potential contributors to mine action at the national level is of particular importance.

The mine action budgets for 2007 and beyond are not yet decided. However, I would like to state that we will make every effort to increase our mine action funding in the coming years.

We hope to be in a position to provide more detailed information on this matter at the next Intersessional meeting.