



REPUBLIC OF

TAJIKISTAN

Isomator



**Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction**

**(Seventh Meeting of the States Parties, 18 September - 22 September 2006, Geneva)**

Co-chairmen, Honourable Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Tajikistan Mine Action Programme is being implemented in accordance with our Five –Year Mine Action Strategic Plan for 2004-2009, which was approved by the national government on 27 July 2006. Within the framework of this plan we intend to increase our productivity and cost-effectiveness of mine clearance in 2006 - 2007.

Our major objectives include:

- Reduce impact of landmines on poor communities;
- Double cost effectiveness and productivity of mine clearance, compared with 2006;
- Complete clearance of high and medium impact priority minefields by 2007;
- Complete training of TMAC national management and national mine action program by 2007;
- Increase MRE and VA activities.

During the period after the last meeting of the Standing Committee, we have cleared areas totalling more than 100,000 sq. m. More than 800 mines and 20 UXOs were also identified and destroyed during this process. Since the beginning of August 2006 we have deployed mine detecting dog teams (MDDT), which within the framework of regional cooperation were trained at the Mine Dog Centre in Afghanistan during the first half of this year. The use of the MDDT has allowed us to increase the speed of mine clearance. The OSCE financially supported the establishment a Mine Detecting Dogs' Centre in Dushanbe and the Ministry of Defence has provided training areas for them.

Unfortunately, there have also been two demining accidents this year. First, in April a French supervisor, Gilles Sarrazin was killed and local deminer Azam Asrorov was injured. Second, In August local deminer Mehrali Mullomurodov was severely injured while conducting demining activities in the field and is now left totally blinded.



According to the results of our GMAA, there are more than 25 million sq m of mine-contaminated land in Tajikistan. Since 2003 our teams have cleared an area of more than 300,000 sq. m.

To comply with our obligations to the Ottawa Convention – that is to say to complete all mine clearance activities by 30 April 2010 – Tajikistan has less than 4 years to finish clearance of all AP minefields. Simple arithmetic shows that Tajikistan's chances of meeting its obligation within the deadline are slim indeed. Progress on this issue depends primarily on funding. The demining season in Tajikistan normally lasts 6 or 7 months and usually starts in April. At this moment, there are two months remaining of this year's season. However, only 4 manual mine clearance teams and 4 MDDTs have been deployed to task sites. Due to the lack of or late funding, 4 survey teams were also not deployed to operational areas this year.

We believe that commercial agencies and mechanical mine clearance machines can very significantly accelerate the process of mine clearance and efforts are underway to mobilise resources and plan for such activities in 2007 and beyond. As always, our plans depend on the generosity of our donor countries.

Although Tajikistan's current economic situation and the level of economic development within the country does not permit a large amount of funds to be contributed to the national mine action programme at this time, each year the Government's contribution to support the programme is being increased. The national mine action programme in Tajikistan functions within a responsive and welcoming host nation environment. At the moment, the Government of Tajikistan provides technical assistance in realization of Article 5 of the Ottawa Convention. Last year this assistance was equal to approximately more than USD 300 000. The national government provides the use of training areas, buildings and facilities and as well as munitions for the trainings. It also provides one helicopter on permanent standby in cases of evacuation or transportation of landmine/UXO victims out of mined fields (this year the helicopter was twice provided for evacuation of landmine/UXO victims). Apart from this, the ministries of defence and emergency situations, and the national Border Defence Committee provide human resources to the programme. The national TV and radio broadcasting agencies broadcast mine action messages and film spots without charge; mine action equipment and supplies imported into the country enjoy tax and duty-free status and we operate generally within an amiable political climate.

During the past three years, the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD) has been responsible for mine clearance operations, through the employment of local personnel as deminers. During this period, local specialists have obtained useful expertise and we consider this national capability as part of the appropriate resources needed to create our independent national management of our mine action programme. This national ownership of the programme, assisted by the FSD, has proven crucial to our modest successes so far and we remain optimistic that this vital support will continue in the coming years. Consultation and negotiations are currently ongoing with representatives of FSD about phases and procedures in order to handover responsibility for management of mine clearance operations to national bodies and we acknowledge that this process requires careful, accurate and comprehensive analysis of handover consequences for the

programme's management. The issue of creating an appropriate national body to replace FSD is being discussed together with relevant governmental ministries and agencies and we plan to announce a date for completion of the process of nationalization soon.

To fulfil our obligations to the Ottawa Treaty and in the spirit of international cooperation, we need the following support urgently:

- ✓ USD 12 million for Completion Initiative;
- ✓ Mechanical mine clearance machines;
- ✓ Support to mine Victims Assistance projects.
- ✓ Access to a comprehensive *series* of training events/courses and international exchanges for managers and supervisors.

### **Mine Risk Education (MRE):**

The Red Crescent Society, supported by ICRC and UNDP, are implementing a wide ranging MRE Programme in Tajikistan, with activities underway in 14 mine-affected districts. As well as continuing these activities, from 2007 our MRE strategy will be led by UNICEF, supported by the Ministry of Education.

In order to strengthen the programme, more than 3,200 Hazard Warning Signs have been manufactured and erected in mined areas of the Tajik-Afghan border as well as along the Tajik-Uzbek border and around landmine contaminated areas in the central region. Surveys have proven that such warning signs are indispensable in preventing tragic accidents, however, there continue to be large contaminated areas still to be marked.

Last year an ICRC supported project – Safe Playgrounds for Children: construction of sports facilities, was implemented by the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan (RCST). As part of this project eight Safe Playgrounds were constructed in areas in the north of the country most affected by landmines. This year, the project was supported by UNDP, which secured funding for the construction of a further two such playgrounds.

In closing, I would like to thank all those donors, organisations, and individuals who have so far assisted in maintaining and strengthening Tajikistan's mine clearance programme and MRE activities.

Thank you for your attention.