



Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Anti-Personnel Stockpiles Destruction

Presented

By

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In the Name of Almighty Allah, Compassionate and Most Merciful

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentleman,

Good morning to you all. First and foremost, I would like to extend my gratitude to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for hosting the 8th Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. I am confident that Jordan's reaffirmation of the Convention's norms is of great significance and importance for those countries in the Middle East that have yet to join this successful disarmament treaty.

Equally, congratulation is in order to His Royal Highness, Prince Mired for assuming the Presidency of this meeting. I am fully confident that under his tutelage, our proactive deliberations will culminate into tangible results.

Today, I am honored to represent the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and declare that based on stockpile-destruction Article 4 of the Ottawa Convention, Afghanistan has fully completed the destruction of all of its known stockpiles of anti-personnel mines.

Hence, I would like to provide all of you with some background information on how Afghanistan has come thus far toward the elimination of all its known anti-personnel mine stockpiles.

As you all know, during the last 4 years Afghanistan has had a formidable challenge in tackling the problem of stockpiled anti-personnel mines. Preceding years of intervention and negligence by some powers, which instigated factional wars in Afghanistan, also generated excessive amounts of war debris across the entire country. Therefore, weapons and ammunition of all types and sizes including anti-personnel mines, anti-tank mines, AK-47s, grenades, mortars, rockets, missiles, and bombs has littered the entire country, much of which is remote, mountainous and dangerous. At the beginning, as Afghanistan pushed forward with massive democratic changes, it faced insurgents and rival groups often hiding and guarding these stockpiles.

In March 2003, when the Government of Afghanistan became the 126th Member State to the Ottawa Convention, the Government fully began planning to destroy all known stockpiles of anti-personnel mines under Article 4 of the convention.

As such, in 2004, with the support of the UN and the international community, the Ministry of Defense of Afghanistan established the Anti-Personnel Mines and Ammunition Stockpile Destruction Project. Under this project, 8 Ammunition Survey Teams began working diligently in identifying stockpiles of weapons and ammunition, including anti-personnel mines across Afghanistan. The teams reported daily the

information on types, quantity and numbers of stockpiled ammunition through ANBP to the Ammunition Working Group (AWG) at the Ministry of Defense. Under this project, ammunition deemed safe to be moved was transported to secure storage facilities, while remaining anti personnel mines and ammunition was destroyed according to the newly established national mine action standard, which could ensure the safety and environmental hazard during the destruction.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For your information, to complete the destruction of all known anti-personnel mines in Afghanistan, 2 remaining depots about 150 kilometers north of Kabul, had to be cleared. By the end of February 2007, more than 1,314 metric tones of ammunition and weapons were already removed from that site. However, after lengthy talks with various groups and communities, in October 2007, it became possible to allow the Ministry of Defense and Ammunition Survey Teams to access the valley and to remove remaining anti-personnel mines and ammunition from these depots.

Finally, these efforts resulted in the location and the destruction of more than half a million stockpiled anti-personnel mines in total in Afghanistan. Hence, the people and the government of Afghanistan are proud of this monumental accomplishment.

At this juncture, I would like to emphasise that this monumental task would have not been possible without the enormous amount of work and generous support of our implementing partners and international community. We are also indebted to the United Nations Mine Action Center for Afghanistan (UNMACA) for their coordinating efforts.

Although the destruction of known anti-personnel mines was completed, the effort still continues for remaining ammunition stockpile destruction. As of today, 18,377 Anti-Tank Mines and 16,928 metric tons of ammunition were destroyed. In Panjsher Valley, 727 truck loads of ammunition, anti-tank mines, weapons and helicopter spare parts has been cleared from the 5 depots among 12 large ammunition depots. At this valley, there still exists vast stockpile of ammunition, and further 1,500 truck loads of ammunition that needs to be cleared in coming months.

Despite the fact that Afghanistan did not meet March 1st deadline, we can not ignore the enormous efforts of our aforementioned implementing partners and international community in the face of extremely difficult contextual conditions, which eventually led to the destruction of all known stockpiles of anti-personnel mines in Afghanistan. Let me assure you, Afghanistan is seriously and fully committed to the enumerated benchmarks contained in the Ottawa Convention.

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentleman,

Before concluding my remarks, let me assure you, as a newly founded democracy, Afghanistan is not faced with conflict, rather with tension and pockets of turbulence, which is a normal remnant of 3 decades of intervention, factional war and global terrorism.

Therefore, I recommend that we must not deviate from the norms of this meeting by making irresponsible political statements that might not only underscore the achievements of various countries that are in midst of democratic transition, but also tarnish the implacable record of these meetings by setting up a very bad precedent for our future meetings.

Once again, thank you for your precious time and undivided attention.