

Government of Chad

Statement regarding:

Clearing Mined Areas

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**Eighth Meeting of States Parties to The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use,
Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction**

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[CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY]**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would like to thank the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and in particular Prince Mirad, for all of the excellent work done to organize the Eighth Meeting of States Parties to The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

I would like to use the time I have now to brief you on the progress made in clearing emplaced antipersonnel mines and other explosive devices in Chad and our plans for the years to come.

As was mentioned in the written statement submitted by His Excellency Bamanga Abbas, the Chadian Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, Chad is among the group of States Parties who have an Article 5 emplaced antipersonnel landmine clearance deadline in 2009, having signed the Ottawa Treaty in May 1999. I am pleased to announce that in the eight years since the entry into force of the Treaty for my state, Chadian deminers have released some 616 million square meters of land, through physical clearance and other methods of land release. We pay tribute to these brave deminers – particularly those killed or injured in the course of their duties – who work hard to help their fellow Chadians live safer and more productive lives.

In processing this vast amount of land, Chadian deminers destroyed some 20,000 landmines, including over 14,000 antipersonnel landmines. They also destroyed ten times as many Explosive Remnants of War. Much of the work undertaken in Chad has consisted of what is known as land release through means other than clearance; following proven methodologies to determine that suspected hazardous areas are not in fact contaminated at all by mines or explosive remnants of war, or to use the parlance of the Treaty, are not in fact 'mined areas.'

To get to this stage, some sixteen million US dollars has been spent on mine action in Chad. A significant proportion of these funds have been spent identifying where hazards were suspected to exist and addressing these areas through clearance and other methods of land release. In 2007 alone, some 49,000 devices were destroyed by clearance teams, including, as was mentioned earlier by my colleague who spoke during the 'stockpile destruction' portion of the programme, 11 antipersonnel landmines found in ammunition storage points. I would like to thank the Governments of Canada, Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands who together provided some three hundred and sixty thousand US dollars for this clearance work in 2007. My own Government contributed a further three hundred and nine thousand US dollars to this effort and has already set aside a further two hundred thousand dollars for clearance work in 2008.

It must be said that our efforts in 2006 and 2007 has been directly towards destroying explosive remnants of war, rather than clearing minefields. This is because we have unfortunately seen a tremendous uptick in casualties caused by these explosive remnants of war. Whereas in 2005, 39 Chadians were recorded to have been injured or killed by mines or explosive remnants of war, in 2007, to date, some 184 casualties have been recorded. Of these 184, only 3.3% involved an antipersonnel mine. The vast majority of the casualties recorded this year and last year occurred in the east of Chad, where significant numbers of people are displaced, or otherwise vulnerable, due to recent conflict, which consists largely of raiding parties attacking remote villages, killing and injuring Chadians and leaving behind large amounts of explosive remnants of war. There is much work left to be done in the East and, in this context, we welcome the upcoming deployment of MINURCAT, the United Nations and European Union mission in eastern Chad. We know that our colleagues from the United Nations Mine Action Service, who will deploy

with the MINURCAT mission, will work closely with the Government of Chad and with the United Nations Development Programme, our partners in the struggle for the past eight years, and also with UNICEF who work with us in the area of mine risk education.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I myself joined the struggle against mines and explosive remnants of war only this year, following a Government review of mine action in Chad. This review resulted in a Government decree to reorganize the national mine action authority, the *Haut Commissariat National de Deminage*, establishing an inter-ministerial Board of Directors and a distinct national mine action agency, the *Centre National de Déminage*, which is accountable, through the inter-ministerial Board, to both the Government and the people of Chad.

As the head of the national mine action agency, I am charged with the heavy responsibility of implementing Chad's obligations with regards Article 5 of the Ottawa Treaty; to clear Chad of emplaced antipersonnel mines. Given that in less than eight years, we have released, as previously stated, some 616 million square meters of land and have, in so doing, destroyed some 14,000 antipersonnel mines, we are optimistic that Chad can be made mine free in a foreseeable future. However, some 668 million square meters of suspected hazardous areas and a further unknown quantity of minefields in past areas of conflict in the far north-west Tibesti region of Chad and elsewhere will need to be addressed before we reach our aim. Therefore, I can today confirm that Chad intends to file a request, at the next Meeting of the States Parties, for a three to five year extension of the deadline for completing the destruction of emplaced antipersonnel mines. Before filling this request, we will revise our strategic plan to include the following elements:

1. We will enshrine in our national standards the methodology used to release land through means other than clearance.
2. We will expand our minefield survey and clearance capacity, without abandoning our commitment to addressing the ERW contamination that is killing and injuring Chadians now.

3. Political conditions permitting, we will survey the far north-west of Chad, to determine how much suspect hazardous area exists. These findings will have a significant bearing on the exact length of our clearance deadline extension request.
4. We will increase our mine risk education and community liaison capacity.
5. We will work with our Chadian Government partners to redouble our efforts in the area of victim assistance.

Based on what we know today and assumptions that can be made about the Tibesti region (which we think contains the highest concentration of minefield in Chad) there are still tens of thousands – not hundreds of thousands – of mines left in the ground in Chad. Clearing these minefields, many of which are to be found in remote under-populated desert areas, will cost tens of millions – not hundreds millions – of dollars. This effort will require hundreds – not thousands – of deminers. Finally, it will require several more years, but not ten; as long as our partners in the international community work with us to achieve the common aims of our Treaty. Once again, I would like to thank past donors to mine action in Chad, who include, in addition to those I mentioned earlier, the United States of America, Japan, Italy, France, Switzerland, and Great Britain and invite you and indeed all States Parties to the Ottawa Treaty in a position to do so to renew your partnership with the mine action programme in Chad.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The beginning of the end of the landmine problem in Chad is now.

Thank you for your kind attention.