

Statement by the Republic of Estonia  
Thematic discussion on providing assistance in clearing mined areas  
Mine Ban Convention 8MSP Meeting  
18-22 November 2007  
Dead Sea, Jordan

Distinguished President,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a privilege and a pleasure for me to address the 8MSP meeting with a brief intervention and to share information on the contribution of the Republic of Estonia to actions taken in the field of assistance given in clearing mined areas.

Estonia supports all efforts, including those within the framework of the Mine Ban Treaty as well as the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, aimed at achieving a global ban of anti-personnel mines. Since 1999, Estonia has contributed annually to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Mine Action. In the previous as well as this year Estonia contributed financially also to the Implementation Support Unit Trust Fund of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining.

Estonia does not possess any anti-personnel mines and there are no mined areas in Estonia. However, we cannot ignore the threat posed by mines. Estonian soldiers participating in international operations face these threats on a daily basis, and some of them have been seriously injured due to contact with (improvised) anti-personnel mines.

Estonia supports the international community's efforts to assist post-conflict recovery areas by contributing explosive ordnance disposal units to international operations. Explosives Detection Dog team participated in operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan from February 2003 to July 2005. Its main task was explosives clearance, including mine clearance in Kabul and in the provinces of Bagram, Ghazni and Wordak. The team members were members of Estonian Rescue Board and their mission in Afghanistan was funded from Estonian defence budget as well as Estonian Government's reserve funds.

Estonia has also deployed its Explosive Ordnance Disposal team to NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. The team has been funded from Estonian defence budget and it has been tasked with clearance and destruction of explosives, including anti-personnel mines and UXO. The team has operated in different areas: from March 2003 to June 2005 its operation area was in Kabul and in the near vicinity of Kabul, until February 2006 the team fulfilled its tasks as part of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in the province of Mazar-e-Sharif, in Northern-Afghanistan. The most recent operating area for the team was Helmand Province in Southern-Afghanistan.

Estonia is fully devoted to continue to support the global effort to achieve a global ban of anti-personnel mines. I would like to reassure you that Estonia will address the problems caused by anti-personnel mines also in the future years.

Thank you.