



THE UNITED NATIONS MINE ACTION

Statement of the United Nations Mine Action Team to the 9th Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty (Geneva, 24-28 November 2008)

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At this Ninth Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty (APMBT), the United Nations Mine Action Team, comprising 14 United Nations Departments, Agencies, Funds, and Programmes¹, wishes to report on progress made in assisting mine-affected States Parties to fulfil their treaty obligations and describe the support provided to mine-affected communities in other countries and territories.

The United Nations Mine Action Team is working in support of Member States efforts to reduce death and injury from landmines and explosive remnants of war in more than 45 countries and territories², the great majority of which have ratified or acceded to the Treaty. The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty is a fundamental component of the normative framework that underpins United Nations mine action and is a testament to what can be achieved when the international community works collectively to tackle a grave humanitarian and development challenge.

The United Nations Mine Action Strategy 2006-2010 contains four strategic goals that aim to reduce the humanitarian and socio-economic threats posed by landmines and explosive remnants of war while supporting governments to build sustainable national mine action capacities to manage, coordinate and implement mine action activities so that dedicated United Nations assistance will no longer be necessary. In Afghanistan significant steps have been taken in the transition of responsibility for mine action from the UN to the Government through partnership with the Department of Mine Clearance in the National Disaster Management Authority, and through establishment of a Governmental Inter-Ministerial body for mine action.

¹ UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS), UN Office of Disarmament Affairs (ODA), UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women (OSAGI), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO) and World Bank.

² Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea Bissau, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, *occupied Palestinian territory*, Russian Federation (*Chechnya*), Republic of Serbia (*Kosovo*), Senegal, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Thailand, Tajikistan, Uganda, Viet Nam, Morocco (*Western Sahara*), Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

In Iraq, which became a State Party early this year, the Government placed mine action under the custodianship of the Ministry of Environment, which already takes initiatives to include mine action into the National Development Strategy and the International Compact for Iraq.

The United Nations Mine Action Team has previously reported on our efforts to assist States Parties during the meetings of the Standing Committees in May 2008. Much of this information is now reflected in the Geneva Progress Report. In the interest of time, we will take the opportunity afforded under each agenda item to highlight only some of our activities that contribute to the implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty. In doing so, we will make use of the structure of the Nairobi Action Plan.

Universalization (Actions #1-8 of the Nairobi Action Plan)

The United Nations Secretary-General once again took the opportunity of the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action (4 April 2008) to encourage all Member States to accede to the Mine Ban Treaty. More recently, here in Geneva, he called upon the High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II to the CCW Convention to ratify the international treaties that form the legal framework for mine action currently in force, naming the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty together with Protocol V to the CCW and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Members of the UN Mine Action Team, both at headquarters and at field level, have taken every opportunity since the 8MSP to promote the universalisation of the Treaty. These include the activities organized by a number of national mine action programmes to celebrate the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action or the photo exhibition at UN HQ in New York on the same event. In addition, UNDP and Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan participated at the Bali "Ottawa Convention Implementation and Universalization Workshop" organized by Indonesia in February this year. At country level, UN representatives have encouraged accession to the APMBT in bilateral discussions with a number of affected states including in particular, Lebanon, Libya, Nepal and Lao PDR.

Stockpile destruction (Actions #9-16 of the Nairobi Action Plan)

The United Nations provided stockpile destruction assistance to two of the States Parties with Article 4 deadlines occurring in 2008 (Burundi, Sudan). On 31 March, the Republic of Sudan completed the destruction of the known and declared stockpiles of antipersonnel mines in the country, thus meeting the 1st April 2008 deadline. In Burundi, UNDP assisted in organizing the destruction of the entire stock of antipersonnel mines of the Burundian Army Forces, held on 17 March 2008. UNMAS continued to assist in the destruction of stockpiles in the territory of Western Sahara.

Clearing mined-areas (Actions #17-28 of the Nairobi Action Plan)

This year a special focus has been placed upon the Article 5 extension requests submitted by 15 States Parties. We acknowledge and thank the President of the 8MSP for his leadership and tireless efforts as chair of the analysing group. The advice of UNDP was sought to assist with the analysis, and the 9MSP will have to take important decisions with regard to each of the extension requests.

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UNDP has also provided support to States Parties in the preparation of extension requests by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chad, Croatia, Jordan, Mozambique, Senegal, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

The United Nations Mine Action Team is working together with governments and mine action organizations to advance demining by assisting national programmes to adopt approaches that ensure the effective use of resources and the release of more land in a more efficient manner. In this regard, land release was an extensively discussed issue during the 8MSP. Since then, the United Nations Mine Action Team and the GICHD have worked to critically and constructively review the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) relating to general and technical survey. These revised IMAS, to be adopted by the next meeting of the IMAS Review Board, will assist affected States Parties comply with Article 5 by clarifying how to reduce and cancel large areas of suspicion that do not actually contain explosive hazards. This will enable scarce demining resources to be targeted more effectively and effectively in contaminated areas.

With regards to the identification of affected areas, during the past year the United Nations has cooperated with others to provide assistance in survey activities in Angola, Guinea Bissau, Malawi, Mauritania, Nepal, Senegal, Sudan, Tajikistan, Zambia and Uganda.

UNDP continues to implement its Completion Initiative to assist States Parties with a relatively modest anti-personnel mine problem to develop a national strategy to meet their Article 5 obligations in collaboration with donors and implementing partners. With the operational assistance of Norwegian Peoples Aid, Malawi has completed its obligations and excellent progress has been made in Albania, Mauritania and Zambia. States Parties that could also successfully adopt this approach are Burundi, Guinea Bissau, Rwanda and Senegal, all of which now have a comparatively small problem that could be easily solved.

Also during this reporting period, the United Nations has contributed to the development of a comprehensive mine action plan in Afghanistan for the year 2009-2010, mapping out the requirements for compliance with the APMBT, and the Afghanistan Compact. In addition, Iraq is developing a comprehensive strategy for mine action, as well as relevant national legislation, consistent with its obligations under the APMBT.

Chad has revised its national strategy and action plan, after the restructuring of the National Authority. It now comprises a steering committee, a national demining centre (Centre National de Déminage, CND) and four operational regional centres. Additional operational support is being coordinated by UNMAS through the MINURCAT Peacekeeping Mission.

Mine Risk Education (in relation to Actions #20 and #21 of the Nairobi Action Plan)

The UN continued its support to a range of mine risk education projects covering community liaison, victim surveillance, public information, education and training in some 30 countries across different regions.

UNICEF, in collaboration with GICHD, has developed a Training Manual in support of existing MRE IMAS Best Practices Guidebook. The manual, which is being finalized, consists of several modules and will provide mine action practitioners with an easy and user-friendly tool to develop and implement effective MRE projects and activities.

UNICEF also finalized the development of an Emergency MRE Toolkit designed to guide MRE project managers in a step-by-step manner through the first six weeks of an emergency MRE campaign, in a post-conflict situation. A set of guidelines on national capacity development and integration of MRE into national institutions such as schools was also developed by UNICEF.

Together with GICHD and other partners, UNICEF is also working to establish an international MRE Advisory Group, which will provide overall guidance to the sector and identify ways to improve effectiveness and efficiency of MRE within the broader mine action sector.

Gender (in relation to Actions #21 and #35 of the Nairobi Action Plan)

The United Nations Mine Action Team is committed to mainstreaming gender considerations in all areas of its work. This includes ensuring that surveys and information gathering activities that form the basis for decision making and priority setting of mine clearance include sex and age disaggregated data, and gender sensitive approaches to ensure that decisions are based on the needs of men, women, boys and girls.

The IACG-MA Gender in Mine Action Steering Committee organized a Gender Stocktaking Workshop to identify and share good practices and lessons in mainstreaming gender into mine action. Participants from UNMAS, UNDP, UNICEF, OCHA, UNHCR and from national mine action programmes in Cambodia and Lao PDR convened in the UN Logistics Base in Brindisi, Italy (UNBL) from 23 to 25 September 2008. The workshop aimed to inform the revision of the Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes. This initiative also contributed to advance the implementation of Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and the Millennium Development Goals.

Exchange of equipment and material and share of mine action techniques, technologies and procedures (Actions #25-26 of the Nairobi Action Plan)

UNMAS, UNDP and UNICEF continue to facilitate training to national mine action operators in partnership with others, including Cranfield University and James Madison University, through workshops and other activities.

The Annual Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and United Nations Advisors held in Croatia and Slovenia in 2008 provided an opportunity to view some new equipment and to exchange experiences and good practices on mine action technologies. For the first time, the meeting was (partly) held in a mine-affected State Party co-hosted by Slovenia (13-14 April) and Croatia (15-17 April, 2008) together with the United Nations Mine Action Team.

UNMAS and GICHD organised a Mine Action Technology Workshop for mine action technical staff from the field, which was held in Geneva on 8-10 September 2008. Some 76 participants (double than the number of participants to the 2006 workshop) represented 54 organisations from 33 countries. Commercial and manufacturing companies were also represented. The aim of the workshop was to provide an opportunity to exchange ideas and share experiences and to learn about what is new in the field of technology.

UNICEF is supporting national landmine and ERW victim information systems that are essential for the prioritisation of mine action activities. In collaboration with the US based

Centre for Diseases Prevention and Control (CDC). UNICEF organized a Field Epidemiology for Mine Action (FEMAC) training course for 26 mine action workers in 16 mine/ERW affected courses. The course took place in Atlanta, US, on 5-16 October 2008 and was primarily focused in African countries.

UNDP supported Libya and the Ghaddafi Foundation together with the Anti Mines Association in organising its first International Conference on the Impact of Landmines on Development with the slogan of "A mine free Libya", 3-4 November 2008. The conference included the sharing of experiences by other affected States Parties and states not-Party to the APMBT, among them Angola, Croatia, Egypt, Jordan, Mauritania and Sudan and presentations by NGOs and international organisations such as NPA and GICHD on their support to mine action and the benefits of accession to APMBT.

Victim assistance (Actions # 29-39 of the Nairobi Action Plan)

During the course of 2008, the United Nations Mine Action Team supported victim assistance activities in a number of countries, including Afghanistan, Iraq and Sudan. In Afghanistan, the UN has actively supported capacity development and mainstreaming of disability issues within key Government Ministries, and advocacy for the signature of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Mine victims in Iraq, especially outside of Iraqi Kurdistan, require urgent assistance. A joint pilot initiative of the Ministry of Health and UN Nations/Centre for Disease Control for injury surveillance is ongoing with the intention of extending these services to the whole country.

The United Nations Mine Action Team continued to assist Sudan to further implement the National Strategic Framework and Work Plan for Victim Assistance, by supporting data collection, needs assessment and pilot projects for physical rehabilitation and vocational training. UNMAS, in collaboration with UNDP, UNICEF, UNOPS and Sudanese authorities, has organized this week in the Palais des Nations a photo exhibition entitled "Rebuilding the lives of landmine survivors in Sudan".

We wish to note that 26% percent of the projects in the 2009 Portfolio of Mine Action Projects are dedicated to victim assistance programmes – the highest percentage to date. Unfortunately we note that only 8% percent of 2008 projects received funding and would therefore encourage those in a position to do so to support survivor assistance initiatives.

We continue to advocate for the universalization of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by countries affected by mines and explosive remnants of war and we always highlight the way in which this new treaty supplements the victim assistance provisions of the APMBT.

To this end, the UN and Survivor Corps have developed a toolkit on the CRPD to support the ratification and implementation of the Convention in affected countries. The tool kit was also presented at the Annual International Meeting of Mine Action Programme Directors and UN Advisors.

Cooperation and assistance (Actions #40-50 of the Nairobi Action Plan)

Field programmes now input data on-line to the Portfolio of Mine Action projects and are able to monitor and update content throughout the year. The 2009 Portfolio will be launched this week and we are organizing a side event during this 9MSP (Tuesday, 1:00 to 2:00 pm in Room XI).

Contributions to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action reached US\$ 93 million approximately in 2007. We appreciate this support from the donor community and encourage continued commitment.

As mentioned, and for the first time out of eleven meetings, the International Meeting of Mine Action Programme Directors and UN Advisors was this year convened, at least partially, in a mine-affected State Party: Croatia. Our annual meetings have proved to be a unique opportunity to exchange views and experiences among mine action field operators, and advancing the capacity of the United Nations to assist and cooperate in mine action. Once again we saw active participation from all parties among them, the Director of the ISU, Mr. Kerry Brinkert, who contributed by reminding us of the importance to continue using the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty as an effective framework for international assistance and cooperation for mine action.

Mainstreaming mine action into development

The United Nations Mine Action Team continues to advise States on mainstreaming mine action into multi-sectoral planning and budgeting processes to ensure the highest socio-economic impact and return of mine action activities, in consistency with the UN Mine Action Strategy 2006-2010. Our strategy emphasizes the importance of mainstreaming mine action into broader development plans, budgets and programmes to support mine action planning in accordance with broader national development and reconstruction plans to ensure the highest return from investments in demining and to encourage budgeting of national resources of mine action activities.

Transparency reports (Actions # 51-58 of the Nairobi Action Plan)

In the last year the United Nations continued to provide assistance to States Parties at the country-level to prepare transparency reports as per Article 7 of the Treaty in countries such as Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Cambodia, Chad, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, Guinea Bissau, Jordan, Mauritania, Senegal, Serbia, Sudan, Tajikistan, Uganda, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Finally Mr. President,

The United Nations Mine Action Team highly appreciates the recent meetings of your predecessor, His Royal Highness Prince Mired of Jordan, with the Secretary-General and other senior United Nations officials in New York to discuss the importance of the Treaty and advocacy efforts in light of the upcoming 10th Anniversary of its entry into force next year

In this regard, we want to reaffirm our support to the universalization and the full implementation of the Treaty and to reiterate our commitment to do everything within our mandates to assist mine-affected countries in meeting their obligations to clear mined areas, assist victims, destroy stockpiled mines, and educate men, women, boys and girls about the dangers of mines and explosive remnants of war.