

Mine Ban Treaty 9th Meeting of State Parties
Geneva November 2008

Item: Cooperation & Assistance

Intervention by The **Netherlands** on Humanitarian Demining

Mr Chairman,

Anti-personnel mines, Explosive Remnants of War and other Unexploded Ordnance contaminate, maim, kill and impose a socio-economic burden on people in the affected countries.

The consolidation of peace and security is the first priority at the end of an armed conflict. This period is often characterised by a poorly functioning military (or other security service), the presence of armed ex-combatants, wide spread availability of small arms and the existence of unexploded ordnance.

The Netherlands supports a coherent and integrated approach to development and reconstruction. Political, humanitarian, economic, military and development related instruments are used in implementing a strategy, which, first and foremost, takes into account the local context. Mine action is recognised by The Netherlands as also being an integral part of this reconstruction and development.

The Netherlands commits itself to providing mine action assistance to countries less able or unable to act on their own, in line with its obligations under the Ottawa Convention. With regards to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), the Netherlands has assumed similar obligations relating to abandoned and unexploded ordnance. Mine clearance, rehabilitation of land mine survivors and destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines all come under the umbrella of the term 'mine action'.

The policy of The Netherlands is based on five principles:

- Geographical spread: priority is given to the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes Region, the Western Balkans and Afghanistan. The Netherlands is active in a number of post conflict countries, amongst others: Angola, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, the DRC, Ethiopia, Iraq, Somaliland and Sudan. NGOs and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) have been responsible for programme implementation in the field, whilst The Netherlands also supports the UNMAS-secretariat in order to reinforce UNMAS and the general coordination in the area of demining.
- Effectiveness: In all cases the preference goes out to activities in areas where the direct risks of mines for the population is the highest or where the socio-economic impact of clearance of terrain will be the greatest.

- Capacity building: the Netherlands strives to engage in effective mine clearance operations in a cost-effective way. We often employ people from the local population with a view to building national capacity in the country concerned.
- The International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) are used by the Netherlands as the 'blueprint' for determining the type of mine action. The application of these internationally recognised principles and procedures, minimum requirements for national authorities, and guidelines for donors and other organisations involved in the process are considered by us as a prerequisite for successful action and therefore are a precondition for activities we support.
- The Netherlands also supports other forms of mine action, such as assistance to victims and mine-risk education, particularly in Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Iraq..

Mr Chairman,

The Netherlands is a strong supporter of mine action and has contributed more than 150 million Euro for this purpose. In the past year expenditure has been more than 17 million Euro, 10 million of which has been channelled through NGO's. Another important conduit for our mine-action funding is the UN Mine Action Service. At present we are in consultation with UNMAS on continuation of our cooperation, which could amount to an additional 10 million euros.

In conclusion: The Netherlands is committed to continuing its support to the Ottawa Convention and to concrete mine action in the field in order to overcome the considerable challenges that still lie ahead.

Thank you, Mr Chairman