

Press Release



Guinea-Bissau free of all known anti-personnel mines

Geneva, 1 February 2012 – Guinea-Bissau has become the latest country to declare that it has cleared all known mined areas according to its obligations under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, or Ottawa Convention.

“Guinea-Bissau is proud to declare that all areas under its jurisdiction or control in which anti-personnel mines were known or suspected to be emplaced, have been cleared in accordance with Article 5 of the Convention, thus complying with our 1 January 2012 deadline”, said Cesar Luis Gomes Lopes de Carvalho, the National Director of Guinea-Bissau’s humanitarian demining programme, in informing the Convention’s Geneva-based secretariat, or Implementation Support Unit of its news.

“We promised the international community that we would complete this task by the beginning of the year. I am proud to report that we have delivered on this promise,” said Cesar Luis Gomes Lopes de Carvalho.

International cooperation, a cornerstone of the Ottawa Convention, was key to Guinea-Bissau’s achievement. “We benefited greatly from the efforts of Landmine Action and Norwegian People’s Aid to assist in addressing the country’s landmine problem as well as from other international non-governmental organisations and home-grown demining institutions,” said the programme’s director. “In addition, we are grateful for the indispensable role played by the United Nations Development Programme and the donor community in supporting the Guinea-Bissau during the eleven years of the programme's duration.”

Guinea-Bissau’s efforts to comply with its mine clearance obligations involved addressing over 5.8 million of square metres of mined or suspected hazardous areas in seven of Guinea-Bissau’s eight regions. A total of 3,724 anti-personnel mines, 318 other mines and over 182,000 other explosive hazards were destroyed.

The landmine problem in Guinea-Bissau dated as far back as the 1963-1974 liberation war with additional landmines and explosive remnants of war laid during the 1998-1999 civil war and the March 2006 Casamance conflict. As a response to this problem, the government of Guinea Bissau established a National Humanitarian Mine Action Programme (PAAMI) and the National Mine Action Coordination Centre (CAAMI) in early 2001.

Guinea-Bissau will now proceed in preparing a formal declaration of completion, to be presented to the international community at the Convention’s Twelfth Meeting of the States Parties, which will be held in Geneva from 3 to 7 December 2012.

With Guinea-Bissau having indicated completion of its mine clearance programme, there are now 20 of 54 States Parties that originally reported mined areas that have completed the task of clearing all such areas. Guinea-Bissau is the tenth State Party in Africa to complete demining activities.

AP Mine Ban Convention Implementation Support Unit

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

The AP Mine Ban Convention was adopted in Oslo in 1997, opened for signature in Ottawa the same year and entered into force in 1999.

To date 159 States are parties to the Convention; 155 of them no longer hold stocks of anti-personnel mines.

Over 44.5 million mines have been destroyed by the States Parties. 34 of 50 States that at one time manufactured anti-personnel mines are now bound by the Convention's ban on production. Most other parties have put in place moratoria on production and / or transfers of mines.

Demining has resulted in millions of square metres of once dangerous land being released for normal human activity.

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