

Brown Bag Session on

Towards a Mine-free Sri Lanka in 2020: Challenges and Prospects for Partnership

Sri Lanka acceded to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) on 13 December 2017, becoming the 163rd country to join the Convention.

Despite being one of the latest State Parties to the Convention, the country has been making consistent efforts over the years and, as a result, achieving significant progress towards fulfilling the core commitments under the APMBC, and has set for itself an ambitious target of a 'Mine-free Sri Lanka by 2020'.

Notwithstanding continuing challenges, including the recent Easter Sunday terrorist attacks on its population, the Government of Sri Lanka remains firm in its commitment to humanitarian disarmament and will continue on its path towards a mine-free Sri Lanka by 2020.

As a result of dedicated work carried out by the Government, the security forces and the international partners over many years, remarkable progress has been achieved by Sri Lanka under all core areas of the APMBC. By end August 2018, over 716,559 Anti-Personal Mines and 387,911 explosive items had been cleared and destroyed, and as of date, only a 25 sq.Km area remains to be cleared.

However, there are certain challenges that Sri Lanka would need to overcome to achieve the desired objective. These include the following:

- Some mine fields are still being discovered while work is in progress
- The cost of removal of land mines is many folds higher than the cost of laying the land mines. Hence, the accelerated implementation requires assured funding.
- The Provision of alternative employment or technical and vocational skills need consideration after de-mining come to an end.
- The need for evidence-based Non-technical Surveys to reduce the cost of demining
- Working in demining is considered highly risky but less rewarding. Therefore, human resources need to be expanded.
- Aid Predictability is a challenge as funds are received on annual basis

It is Sri Lanka's hope that it would be able to overcome these challenges and address other priorities such as increased gender integration and sustainable livelihood, through the collaborative effort of all its national and international stakeholders in the area of mine action, with national ownership at the center of all efforts.

Sri Lanka's early completion of its mine clearance activities, despite being one of the youngest members of the APMBC, would undoubtedly provide an impetus for the 2019 Oslo Review Conference on a Mine-Free World, as well as for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), since humanitarian demining cuts across all SDGs.

The event

At the Brown Bag Session '***Towards a Mine-free Sri Lanka in 2020: Challenges and Prospects for Partnership***', Sri Lanka's mine action experts, along with their international

partners, would meet participants of the APMBC Intersessional Meeting to discuss Sri Lanka's achievements as well as challenges in securing a Mine-free Sri Lanka by 2020, as well as in other areas such as victim assistance, mine risk education, institutional strengthening and ensuring sustainability, and examine the way forward to contribute to the 'Oslo Action Plan'. The event would invite views and inputs from participating States and experts on overcoming the challenges that Sri Lanka is facing and the prospects for building partnerships to that end.

Title of the event : Brown Bag Session ***'Towards a Mine-free Sri Lanka in 2020: Challenges and Prospects for Partnership'***

Date & time : 23 May 2019, 13.00 – 14.30 hrs

Venue : Room B

Moderator : H.E. Mr. A.L.A. Azeez, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the UN in Geneva

Speakers:

- Mr. V. Sivagnanasothy, Secretary, Ministry of National Policies, Economic Affairs, Resettlement and Rehabilitation, Northern Province Development and Youth Affairs, Government of Sri Lanka
- H.E. Mr. Hans Brattskar, Permanent Representative of Norway to the UN in Geneva and the President of the Fourth Review Conference of the APMBC (Guest Speaker)
- Mrs. S. Jaladeepan, Director and National Focal Point coordinating the National Mine Action Programme, National and Regional Mine Action Centres

Light lunch with Ceylon Tea will be provided to all participants.