

Statement on Clearance (Article five APMBC)

**APMBC Intersessional Meetings
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Your Excellencies, distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Afghan delegation, I am pleased to present the achievements and the challenges of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in fulfilling its commitments under the Article Five of the Convention.

(PAUSE)

Since the inception of the programme in 1989, the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan has addressed 78 percent of mine and ERW problem in the country. However, 3,820 minefields, covering 588 square kilometres are yet to be cleared, and continue to affect 1,500 communities, 256 districts, in 33 provinces.

(PAUSE)

Afghanistan was granted a ten-year extension to the deadline to complete the removal of all anti-personnel mines by 2023. We are now in the fifth year of the Extension Work Plan. Although we achieved the clearance target for the first year, (2013), achievements respectively was only 69.8% of the target for year two, 65 % for year three and 54% of the target for year 4.

(PAUSE)

The present situation tells us that we are failing to meet the annual targets and the reason for this is mainly due to lack of sufficient funds. The programme structure and its specialised and professional capacity are all in place enabling us to deliver on our planned targets, although new challenges are also emerging in some actively conflict-affected areas, which is adding a new burden to an already piled up work that we need to accomplish.

(PAUSE)

Data suggests that between January and April, 2017, a monthly average of 105 Afghan civilians were killed or injured in explosive hazard accidents. Of this figure, Pressure Plate IEDs accounted for 58 percent. Beside the funding shortfall, the increasing use of Pressure Plate IEDs by insurgents and contamination of areas by ERW as a result of ongoing armed conflicts are some of the challenges faced by the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan.

(PAUSE)

H.E the President recently tasked the National Security Council to work with the Directorate of Mine Action Coordination of the State Ministry for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Affairs to identify communities which are at “high risk” due to presence of mines, ERW and IEDs, as a result of the ongoing armed conflicts. Based on the list of battle areas provided by the Ministry of Defense, the Directorate of Mine Action Coordination with the support of operators conducted a preliminary survey in 17 provinces and identified 270 areas contaminated mostly by IEDs and ERW left behind as a result of fighting since 2001. The size of contamination is around 420 sq km based on

which a proposal was developed and submitted to National Security Council (NSC) for funding.

(PAUSE)

For the Government, mine action remains a priority as a cross-cutting issue and prerequisite for the country's development. Recently mine action has been included in a number Government Priority Programmes and indicators of the sustainable development goals.

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The Afghan Government also recently ratified the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons with all its protocols including the amended protocol two. We believe that the ratification of the convention, particularly the protocol two and five, is an indication that the Afghan Government recognises the importance of mine action, and will further promote and strengthen the efforts made by the mine action partners and government's relevant ministries toward achieving the goal of making Afghanistan free of mines and ERWs by 2023.

(PAUSE)

On behalf of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, we gratefully acknowledge the help and financial contributions of all donors and the United Nations Mine Action Services technical and management support to the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan for the last 27 years.

Thank you all for your attention.