



ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN

Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Intersessional Meetings | 22 – 24 June 2021 Virtual

Thematic Session: Completion and Sustainable National Capacities
Wednesday, 23 June, 16:00 – 17:45 CEST Committee on Article 5

Excellencies,

Distinguished Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf Afghanistan, I am honored to present an update on the thematic Session 'Completion and Sustainable National Capacities.'

Afghanistan still continues to be one of the most contaminated countries in the world. A total of 3,939 recorded hazards, covering 613 sq.km remains contaminated by AP, AV mines, Improvised Mines and Explosive Remnants of War. They continue to affect over 1529 communities, 264 districts, in all 34 provinces of the country.

In addition to 613 sq.km of contaminated area that is recorded in the national database, there is 213 suspected Hazardous Areas covering approximately 196 sq.km contaminated with Improvised Mines and Explosive Remnants of War and 659 sq.km of High Explosive Training Ranges left behind from NATO forces that need to be cleared.

Unfortunately, remnants of the ongoing armed conflicts add to scale of contamination though the actual extent of new contamination is not yet fully determined. Looking at the past twelve months, we know that on average some 125 Afghan civilians lose their lives or get injured by landmines, ERW and Improvised Mines every month, which is one of the highest casualty rates in the world. Around 66 % of the civilian accidents are caused by improvised

mines, 33% by ERW and some 1% by industrial landmines. Sadly, children comprise 48 percent of civilian casualties caused by mines and ERW.

Regrettably, improvised mines are still used by antigovernment elements as a weapon of choice and these devices are posing a serious threat to the lives of civilians.

To address this increasing challenge and in order to effectively utilize the humanitarian mine action capacity for survey and clearance of Improvised Mines, one of the MAPA's implementing partners has established clearance and survey teams capable of dealing with Improvised Mines since 2019 and they are delivering in most affected provinces. A comprehensive training has been provided to all IPs and DMAC technical staff on survey and clearance of Improvised Mines. The said training package included Quality Management and ToT courses as well. More Implementing Partners are acquiring the necessary technical capacity to engage in survey and clearance of Improvised Mines.

We are now into the ninth year of the Extension Work Plan. Collectively we have achieved only 106% of the projected clearance target we had set for the recent eight years. Civilian casualties a result of legacy industrial landmines has decreased. Therefore, the programme has been successful in achieving the targets and plan set for 2013 – 2023.

As a result of the ongoing conflict new areas have become contaminated. Funding shortfall, insecurity, access prevention by anti-government elements are some the reasons why the country will not be able to achieve its 2023 mine-free status.

For instance, MAPA's funding target for the current year is USD 183 million, of which USD 22 million has so far been secured. This is approximately 12% of our funding target for the year.

Having said that, I regret to let you know that we shall need to request another extension of Afghanistan's Article Five deadline. Of course, we shall present the request to the state parties a year before of the deadline.

Reference to Action # 3 of the Oslo Action Plan, it is worth mentioning that Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming is considered as a vital priority for the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan. Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming is one of the five goals of the National Mine Action Strategic Plan to ensure the diverse needs and experiences of people in affected communities are captured. In the last 2 years we have employed more women in mine action and efforts are being made to further mainstream gender and diversity in the programme.

A national capacity to respond to all types of contaminated areas exists in the country. Training and capacity building of national staff, including civil servants continue to take place.

On a final note, on behalf of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, I would like to express our gratitude for the contributions of all donors and partners. Thank you very much