



Review of the Operation and Status of the Convention

Clearing mined areas

The full implementation of Article 5 obligations is our collective goal; this is what will ensure that we have no new mine victims. We congratulate those States Parties that have declared compliance with Article 5 and cleared all mined areas including Tunisia in May 2009 and, very recently, Zambia and Albania.

According to the Landmine Monitor, about 160 km² was cleared in 2008, the highest annual clearance figure ever recorded. This is promising news, and a good reflection of the power of the Convention.

The United Nations has focused in recent years on safely accelerating the clearance of mined areas and, in the interim, helping to protect civilians from their impact. For example, last year the International Standards on Land Release were finalized and the UN and operators have already begun to apply them widely. This, coupled with continued focus on clearance, rapidly returns land to safe and productive use.

Until all mines are cleared, however, it is equally essential that States Parties continue their efforts to reduce risks from landmines and ERW to their populations through other risk reduction measures, such as mine risk education and community liaison. Ensuring people's right to a safe environment is a central goal of the Mine Ban Treaty. Mine affected communities have a right to be informed about the hazards in their communities, and States Parties should take effective measures to protect affected populations.

Since the Nairobi Review Conference, a number of important lessons have been learned with regards to MRE, with accompanying improvements in MRE's effectiveness. These are broadly

in-line with the general shift in thinking on mine action, particularly that each pillar of mine action should not be treated in isolation but as part of an integrated mine action approach and tailored to specific needs of at-risk populations. Preliminary findings of a review of the UN Mine Action Strategy for 2006 – 2010 that the UN Mine Action Team is currently carrying out, indicate a significant correlation between increased MRE and a reduction in death and injury of girls and boys in particular. This further underscores the intrinsic link between MRE and other areas of mine action and reconfirms the need to ensure that MRE activities are carried out in a gender and age sensitive manner.

We also wish to focus for a moment on an issue that has generated considerable attention within the mine action community and which we believe contributes to the effective operation of the Convention: namely gender mainstreaming.

In recent years significant progress has been made in terms of incorporating a gender perspective in demining operations. Increasingly, successful experiences have included both women and men in mine clearance, prioritisation surveys and land release. The inclusion of a gender perspective, for example through full participation of women, girls, boys and men of a community throughout the planning process has made mine action more efficient and effective. In the past, male leaders were more likely to be consulted by local and international demining agencies even though the different social functions of women and girls made them likely to hold information complementary to that obtained from men and boys. Indeed, the recent practice of consulting women, girls, boys and men, ensures a greater possibility of identifying mined areas that may be unknown to military and political authorities, such as routes to fields or markets. In that regard, hiring and training both male and female surveyors facilitates access to all different groups within a given community.

The body of good practices and lessons learned from mainstreaming gender into the relevant pillars of mine action can inform the Cartagena Action Plan and help to ensure that mine action equally benefits women, girls, boys and men and that women and men have equal access to decision making and equal opportunities as practitioners in mine action.

The combination of these tools -- clearance, land release, mine risk education and community liaison, and the integration of a gender perspective – will accelerate the achievement of the Convention’s goals.

However, with regards to those States Parties currently receiving United Nations support to which extension requests have been granted or will be granted this week, UNMAT is also committed to assist in a manner consistent with the decisions taken by the Meetings of States Parties or this Review Conference.