



# **ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN**

## **Afghanistan's Statement on Clearance – Article Five**

### **Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention**

Fourth Review Conference to the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention

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Oslo, Norway

*Excellencies,*

*Distinguished Colleagues,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

On behalf of the Afghan delegation, I am honoured to present an update on implementation of the Article Five of the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention.

Afghanistan remains committed to the fulfilment of its obligations under Article Five of the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention. Since the Third Review Conference to the APMBC, 5,243 hazards covering 432 sq.km areas were released in Afghanistan. Of the mentioned figure, 3,639 hazards covering 212 sq.km were antipersonnel minefields. As a result of clearance, 80,455 Antipersonnel Mines, 2,726 Antivehicle Mines, 319 Cluster Munitions and 34,8637 Unexploded Ordnance were destroyed.

Despite of these clearance achievements, Afghanistan still remains one of the most heavily contaminated countries in the world. A total of 3,630 recorded hazards, covering 659 sq.km remains contaminated by AP, AV mines and Explosive Remnants of War. They continue to affect over 1500 communities, 254 districts, in 33 out of 34 provinces of the country. Of the 659 sq.km remaining contamination in Afghanistan, 435 sq.km are

Confirmed Hazardous Areas and 224 sq.km are Suspected Hazardous Areas. Afghanistan is planning to clear all these contaminated areas till March 2023.

In addition to 659 sq.km contaminated areas that are recorded in the national database, there is 235 Initially Hazardous Areas covering approximately 465 sq.km contaminated by Improvised Mines and Explosive Remnants of War and 630 sq.km of High Explosive Training Ranges from NATO that all need clearance.

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 to the past twelve months, we know that on average some 106 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. It is worth mentioning that around 54 % of the civilian accidents are caused by improvised mines, 44% by ERW and some 2% by industrial landmines. Sadly, children comprise 59 percent of civilian casualties caused by mines and ERW.

Regrettably, I should say that improvised mines are still used by anti-government 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, the required national mine action standards has been developed by the DMAC and Implementing Partners through a joint effort and IPs have developed their Standard Operating Procedures in view of these policy papers. The national policy on survey and clearance of improvised mines is already in place. Aligned with this effort, one of the MAPA's implementing partners has established four demining teams capable of dealing with Improvised Mines and has successfully completed a pilot survey and clearance project.

Afghanistan has a comprehensive work plan to achieve mine-free status by 2023. We are now into the seventh year of the Extension Work Plan. Although we achieved the clearance target for the first year, 2013, achievements respectively were only 69.8% of the target for year two, 60% for year three, 54% for year 4, 34% for year 5 and 38.5% year six. For the first six months of the operational year of 2019 (April – September), only 20% of the yearly clearance target has been achieved. The reasons for not achieving the clearance target was associated with factors such as funding shortfall, insecurity, access prevention by anti-government elements and continually adding the remaining uncleared balance of previous years to subsequent years.

Looking at the funding status for year 2019 and assuming if the funding status will remain similar till 2023, it is clear that we will neither be able to meet the clearance target for the current year nor we will achieve our Article Five clearance goal by 2023. As an example, MAPA's funding target for 2019 is USD 95 million, of which USD 43 million has so far been secured. This is approximately 45% of our funding target for 2019. If financial situation of the programme continues like this, by March 2023, of the all recorded hazardous areas, 450 sq.km will have still be remained uncleared including 70 sq.km Antipersonnel Minefields, 237 sq.km Antivehicle Minefields, 113 sq.km Explosive Ordnance Contaminated Areas and 32 sq.km areas contaminated by Improvised Mines. It should be noted that the 465 sq.km Initially Hazardous Areas contaminated by Abandoned Improvised Mines and Explosive Remnants of War plus 630 sq.km High Explosive Training Ranges are not included in the mentioned remainder figure as they are not part of the Article Five clearance operations plan yet. Having said that, I regret to let you know that we shall need to request for another five-year extension of Afghanistan's Article Five deadline. Of course, we shall start with preparation of the extension request as of early 2021 and will present it to the state parties a year before the deadline.

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