

## Chairman's Summary

### Regional Workshop on “Development Challenges on Mine Clearance and Victim Assistance in Southeast Asia” Bangkok, Thailand, 30 August - 1 September 2004

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The Royal Thai Government organized the Regional Workshop on “Development Challenges of Mine Clearance and Victim Assistance in Southeast Asia” during 30 August – 1 September 2004 in Bangkok, Thailand (Agenda as Annex I). The Workshop was opened by H.E. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, President of the Fifth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Participants of the Workshop came from countries both within Southeast Asia and beyond. Representatives from United Nations agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other international organizations, and members of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines also participated in the Workshop. The Workshop was also honoured by the participation of a number of landmine survivors from within the region ( List of participants as Annex II)

At the opening of the Workshop. H.E. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai presented awards to representatives of the private sector and NGOs for their active roles and contribution in mine action and victim assistance.

The Workshop was chaired by Mr. Kittipong Na Ranong, Director-General of the International Organizations Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, with support of the following co-chairs : Mr. Thorsten Eisingerich, Charge d’Affaires of the Austrian Embassy to Thailand, H.E. Mr. Chaiyong Satjipanon, Ambassador and Permanent Representatives of Thailand to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva, H.E. Mr. Sam Sotha, Advisor to the Prime Minister of Cambodia and Secretary General of Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority, Mr. Akihiko Uchikawa, Director of Conventional Arms Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, and H.E. Mr. Ross Hynes, Ambassador for Mine Action of Canada.

With collaboration of the Thailand Mine Action Center, the participants of the Workshop made a field visit to mine-related activities at the Panurangsi II Camp in Ratchaburi Province on 1 September 2004.

The purpose of the Workshop was to increase the awareness among policy makers of countries in the Southeast Asian region on the humanitarian and developmental impacts of antipersonnel mines as well as to enhance cooperation in mine actions in the region.

**Overview** *Thailand* provided an overview of the Workshop and highlighted the role of regional initiatives as complementary to the global efforts to promote cooperation in mine action, particularly in the fields of mine clearance, victim assistance, universalization, and resource mobilization. *The Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining* provided an overview of the Convention, highlighting its core objectives, key elements and implementation mechanisms as well as their bearings on such issues as mines other than anti-personnel mines, unexplosive ordnance, human security, etc.

**Session I : Lethal Impediments to Development : *The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)*** gave a presentation on the global context of the Convention, highlighting the fact that landmines continued to claim thousands of lives each year worldwide and civilians continued to account for the vast majority of mine casualties. It was also underlined that according to military experts the humanitarian cost of antipersonnel mines far exceeds their military effectiveness. The ***Thailand Campaign to Ban Landmines (TCBL)*** reported the overall picture of the situation and problems of mine clearance, victim assistance, and mine-risk education in the region. In Southeast Asia, one mine-related casualty occurs every two hours. States in the region should take up the challenges in formulating national plans of action and donor countries should stand ready to assist. The ***UNICEF*** stressed the importance of comprehensive injury surveillance in effectively addressing the issue of mine victim assistance. The need for standardized data collection on mine victims and capacity building was also highlighted.

**Session II : National Planning and Prioritizing : *Cambodia*** presented a detailed summary of national planning, implementation thus far and Cambodia's vision to meet the Convention's mine clearance deadline by 2012. The progress made was partly attributed to partnership between Government agencies, international organizations and NGOs. Challenges ahead included securing sufficient resources for executing the mine clearance obligations of the Convention. ***Thailand*** informed the Workshop about results of the initial mine-impact survey and highlighted the need to continue with the second-level survey as the basis for comprehensive national planning and implementation. Still, mine clearance action is being coordinated with agencies concerned in line with developmental priorities, both at national and provincial levels. The organizational structure and work of Thailand Mine Action Center was also provided, with privatization expected to be completed by the second half of 2005. In another presentation, ***Vietnam*** reiterated the government's commitment in addressing anti-personnel mines and unexplosive ordnance. A community-based approach is being encouraged and cooperation with China in clearing mines along the border has been undertaken. Vietnam considers the issue of ratification of the Convention from practical point of view. While not in a position to indicate a specific timeframe in joining the Convention, Vietnam would appreciate greater assistance in mine action. Being a signatory of the Convention since 1997, ***Indonesia*** reiterated its unwavering commitment to the Convention and its intention to ratify the Convention in due course.

Participants also touched upon the issues of cost-effective mine clearance technologies, the increase of mine clearance capacity through training of deminers, and zero retention of stockpiled mines. States Not Parties in the region were encouraged to expedite the process of joining the Convention, if possible, prior to the First Review Conference of the Convention to be held in Kenya between 29 November – 3 December 2004.

**Session III : National Victim Assistance and Responding to the Needs of Landmine Survivors in Southeast Asia :**

***Cambodia and Thailand*** provided the Workshop with an overview of their victim assistance programmes. The Workshop discussed the need for more comprehensive data collection system with regard to mine victims and the roles of NGOs as governments' partners in providing victim assistance. ***Mine survivors*** also identified a number of issues which deserved special attention, including in particular, access to education for victims and their families and access to medical and health care and psycho-social services. It was stressed that sustainability of integration of

mine survivors back into the mainstream society needs to be ensured and vocational training must be provided together with market access. An emphasis was also given to creating an enabling environment for people to live safely, free from constraints imposed by landmines.

During the discussion, a suggestion was made to quantify the needs of mine survivors to enhance effective response to their needs while avoiding discrimination against other groups of people with disability. It was also stressed that spending in victim assistance should be considered as an investment in development. The need for legislation on disabilities at both national and international levels was also highlighted. Countries were encouraged to participate actively in the negotiation process of the United Nations Draft Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities.

#### **Session IV : Learning Experiences from other regions :**

***Mozambique*** shared with the Workshop its experience in mine action.

A number of lessons were highlighted, including in particular : 1) the need to ensure linkages between mine action and development objectives, 2) the need for accurate information on mine action to help develop appropriate policies and decisions, and 3) the need for diversification of mine action funding.

While not a State Party, ***China*** informed the Workshop that it shared the core humanitarian objectives of the Convention. China outlined its cooperation in mine action activities within the international context and with countries in the region, particularly in mine clearance, and provision of effective and low-cost technologies. China expressed its readiness to further cooperate with Southeast Asian countries and the international community in addressing mine-related issues. China cited a number of lessons as follows : 1) the need for preferential policies and financial support by the government, 2) the need for provision of demining equipment and techniques suitable for local situations, 3) the need for incorporation of mine clearance and victim assistance strategies into overall social economic reconstruction, and 4) the need for mobilization of support from local communities to avoid reliance on external assistance.

***Kenya*** briefed the Workshop on the results of the Regional Workshop for Eastern African states held in Nairobi in March 2004. Key challenges in mine action included, among others, 1) mine risk education, 2) national policies and strategies, 3) human resources and capacity building, 4) financial resources, 5) data collection. Kenya expressed that regional workshops were helpful in promoting exchange of experiences and ideas and suggested that follow-up should be made on matters agreed in the workshops to ensure practical progress.

***UNMAS*** provided information on the United Nations Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan.

***Canada*** provided information on the status of operation of the Convention in the Americas, particularly under the Organization of American States. Canada indicated that the OAS stands ready to share experiences with other regions.

#### **Session V : Cooperation and Assistance - Responding to Needs :**

***Australia, Canada, and Norway*** briefed the Workshop on the work and cooperation they had undertaken in the international context and within the region with regard to mine action and victim assistance and pledged their readiness to continue their contributions. They also highlighted the need to integrate mine action into national, regional and local development programmes and the need for effective national coordination in mine action to maximize the effective use of limited resources.

*The United States*, while not a party to the Convention, informed the Workshop about its assistance given to Thailand Mine Action Center, particularly in terms of heavy machinery and equipment as well as training deminers and dogs for mine clearance.

*Japan* also noted its assistance in mine clearance, victim assistance and mine risk education given to mine-affected countries in Asia and Africa through both public channels and civil society.

*UNMAS/UNDP* briefed the Workshop on the United Nations' programmes of activities on mine action in the region and reaffirmed the United Nations' readiness to work with Governments in the region and all parties concerned in national planning and implementation for mine action, particularly through national capacity building.

*Thailand* informed the Workshop about the work of the Resource Mobilization Task Force (RMTF) in engaging the World Bank. On 22 July 2004, H.E. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, entrusted H.E. Dr. Sorajak Kasemsuwan, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, to lead the RMTF to meet with Mr. Ian Johnson, Vice President of the World Bank. The World Bank expressed its willingness to assist mine action through its existing programme of post-conflict reconstruction. It encouraged mine-affected countries to come up with requests for assistance on the condition that these proposals should be linked to national development plans or poverty reduction strategies. H.E. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai will meet with Mr. James Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, on 20 September 2004 for discussion on further cooperation.

#### **Session VI : Towards a Mine-free region/The Road to Nairobi**

*Austria* as President-designate of the First Review Conference briefed the Workshop on the progress on substantive preparation for the Conference. *Kenya* highlighted the importance of the FRC to Africa as one of the most heavily mine affected regions and briefed the participants on the logistics preparation for the FRC. The *ICBL* informed the Workshop of its expectations of the FRC, which constitutes a critical juncture in the life of the Convention, and urged the adoption of a strong Nairobi Action Plan. All speakers urged the participating countries and countries in the region to send representatives at the highest level possible to Nairobi.

Participants recognized the importance of the Workshop as the last regional workshop held prior to the Nairobi Summit, and therefore, requested the Chair to report the result of the Workshop to the Summit.

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