

Fourth Meeting
Geneva, 16-20 September 2002

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
MINE CLEARANCE, MINE AWARENESS AND MINE ACTION TECHNOLOGIES**

Final Report*
2001-2002

I. Introduction

The Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Awareness and Mine Action Technologies, established in accordance with the decisions and recommendations of Meetings of the States Parties, met in Geneva on 29-30 January 2002 and 28-29 May 2002. These meetings were convened by the Standing Committee's Co-Chairs, Mr Al Azi Mansour of Yemen and Mr Erich Riedler of Germany, with support of their Co-Rapporteurs, Mr Michael Oyugi of Kenya and Mr Marc Acheroy of Belgium.

Representatives of more than 80 States Parties, 30 other States (Signatories and non-Signatories), the relevant United Nations bodies, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and numerous other international and non-governmental organizations participated in the work of the Standing Committee. The meetings were held in Geneva with the support of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). Interpretation for French and Spanish was provided thanks to the support of the European Commission.

The Standing Committee focused its attention on the status of the implementation of the relevant elements of the Convention, received in-depth overviews of two country case studies, was provided with updates on various thematic matters, and received updates from mine affected States Parties and donors on their specific situations and needs.

II. Overview of Status of Implementation

The ICBL's Mine Action Working Group (MAWG) provided the Standing Committee with a comprehensive global overview of the status of implementation as far as it pertains to mine clearance. This overview came to the conclusion that interested actors lack sufficient data and information in order to assess the global situation, to undertake rational targeted mine action activities and to build a strategic plan which donors could stick to in order to prioritise funding.

Further to the identification of this information need, a follow-up presentation proposed that there be a clearer understanding of mine affected states, based not only on the number of victims, but also on other factors, including access to land and infrastructure, types of mines / UXO, and other social and economic aspects. In addition, it was suggested that three levels of decreasing priority be identified: regions of mine impact reduction (high level); mine impact free areas (medium level); and mine free areas (low level).

In assessing the overall status of implementation, it was noted considerable progress has been achieved. Examples were highlighted: The quality of operations has increased, effective information management tools have been developed, International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) are now available, and better and more appropriate technologies are emerging. However, it was also noted that mine clearance is still a very slow and expensive process.

III. Implementation plans and progress

The Co-Chairs provided opportunities for updates on implementation plans and progress by mine affected States Parties. Several States Parties took advantage of these opportunities. In addition, the Standing Committee gave attention to two in-depth country presentations:

A. Afghanistan

It was reported that if funds materialize as expected, priority regions in Afghanistan will be cleared within seven years. However, important needs for the Afghanistan programme were identified, including: the improvement of data collection; the importance of landmine impact surveys; direct and indirect mine awareness training; and the completion of, and support for, the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA). Various strengths of the programme were highlighted, including: the structure of the programme; its integrity and strict neutrality; the successful use of dogs; the continuous ability to innovate; and continuous evaluation. Challenges faced by the programme include: that new mines have recently been laid; the danger posed by cluster ammunition; security; a lack of resources, including resources to replace destroyed and obsolete equipment; a need to increase management by national authorities; and a lack of local participation.

B. Mozambique

It was reported that actions have been undertaken to place the Mozambican demining programme under national authority, to provide it with a national identity, and to increase national capacity. It was stressed that, based on the Mozambican experience, mine action must be seen as part of a development oriented approach, the affected country itself must set its priorities and that mine action needs to be integrated into a national plan in the context of the fight against poverty. In addition, it was emphasised that in mine affected countries, a mine action centre (MAC) should be created as soon as possible, that an impact survey at the country level is a prerequisite to obtaining a clear picture of the extent of the mines / UXO problem, and that all activities should be conducted according to international standards and Convention obligations. An important aspect was the necessity and benefit of intensified co-operation and information exchange between mine-affected countries.

IV. Assistance and cooperation

The Co-Chairs provided opportunities for interested States Parties to give updates on assistance and cooperation. Several States Parties and relevant organizations took advantage of these opportunities. In addition, the Standing Committee paid special attention to the assistance and cooperation role of the United Nations.

A. United Nations

UNMAS reported that the United Nations mine action strategy for the period between 2001 and 2005 was presented to the 56th Session of the UN General Assembly and that this strategy highlighted elements of the UN Programme, support for an emergency response capability, an emphasis on the necessity for impact surveys, and updates on quality management and resource mobilisation.

UNDP reported on the importance it places on capacity building and the socio-economic aspects of mine action. It also noted its support for impact survey and stockpile destruction.

UNICEF reported that its 2002 work plan includes the integration of a mine risk education section into IMAS, supporting the integration of mine risk considerations into IMSMA, monitoring mine risk education to assess its impact, and the development of manuals and training packages for mine awareness managers.

V. Matters of a thematic nature related to implementation

A. Mine risk education

It was reinforced that mine risk education is an integral part of mine action, because it saves lives, helps to collect data for future surveys and clearance, and mobilises public opinion in favour of acceding to the Convention if a mine-affected country has not yet done so. It was emphasised that for a variety of reasons successful mine clearance is very difficult without a mine risk education component. These reasons include the need to build confidence in mine affected communities where mine clearance work is being undertaken, and the need to ensure that individuals in these communities keep a safe distance between themselves and mine clearance activities. The inclusion of mine risk education within the Standing Committee responsible for mine clearance was welcomed unanimously.

B. Technologies for Mine Action

It was highlighted that the development of mine action technologies often takes place with no coherent strategy, with little coordination and on the basis of needs assumed by developers rather than real needs. It was argued that this has resulted in a duplication of efforts, decreased efficiency, and led to a slow-down in the transfer of new technologies to the users. It was also noted that the market for mine action technology is small, inefficient, and shrinking. It was highlighted that technology must be user-oriented, field driven and, even more importantly, affordable.

In response to these points, the Standing Committee identified the following points:

- an international co-ordinated approach is needed;
- users should better define and communicate their requirements to the research and development (R&D) community;
- a peer review system should be put in place to identify relevant current technology needs and those that might be required in the long-term;
- the R&D community should involve users from the concept stage, avoid duplication, and set sensible aims for unit costs and deadlines into service and stick to them; and
- in this context the International Test and Evaluation Programme (ITEP) has a very important role to play.

C. International Mine Action Standards (IMAS)

It was reiterated that the IMAS provides common, agreed levels of performance in mine action, demonstrates agreement and consensus in the mine action community, facilitates the exchange of information and enhances cost effectiveness and safety. It was reported that a total of 23 standards have been completed, new standards are being prepared, and an outreach programme has been established to discuss and explore the IMAS' practical application, to identify further changes that may be needed, to assist national mine action authorities to develop or amend their own national standards and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to reflect the IMAS, and to develop a broad political and technical consensus for the IMAS. It was noted that the translation of the IMAS into user languages should be done on a needs-driven basis.

D. Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA)

The cases of Kosovo and Yemen were highlighted as good examples of how the IMSMA could be used both for managerial purposes and as a database. In addition, it was demonstrated that the IMSMA could be an effective tool to support data collection and Convention reporting, according to Article 5(2) and Article 7(1-2) of the Convention.

VI. An assessment of needs that remain

A total of 26 States Parties have reported mined areas. According to the Landmine Monitor, a further 14 States Parties – countries that either have not submitted Article 7 reports or have not yet had to submit Article 7 reports – suffer from the impact of mined areas. In addition, two States Parties have reported that they suffer from the impact of unexploded ordnance (UXO). In order facilitate international cooperation with a view to assisting these 40 or more States Parties with their Convention obligations, the Co-Chairs recommend that the Standing Committee in 2002-2003 provide these States Parties with sufficient opportunities to effectively inform the Standing Committee of their mine action plans and needs. Similarly, the Co-Chairs recommend that States Parties and others in a position to do so be provided with sufficient opportunities to share with the Standing Committee their plans for assistance.

During 2001-2002, the claim was made within the Standing Committee that high impact mined areas could be cleared in the 10-year timeframe of the Convention if a global strategy is defined. To ensure that action proceeds in a manner that takes into consideration the 10-year time-frame of the Convention, the Co-Chairs recommend that the ICBL, UNMAS, donors, mine-affected States and other interested actors continue to collaborate to gather reliable information on progress in clearing mined land, identify challenges that remain and the resources that will be required to overcome these challenges.

Finally, the Standing Committee identified various thematic areas that warrant follow-up over the next year. These include:

- ensuring that lessons learned from experiences in mine affected countries can be used in other affected countries;
- ensuring that the most recent lessons learned and progress made with respect to mine risk education are shared with the Standing Committee;
- ensuring that the Standing Committee continues to be a forum for promoting best practices, like those contained in the IMAS;
- disseminating information on tools to support mine action or on enhancements to these tools, like the IMSMA; and,
- sharing information on new developments in mine action technologies, as long as these technologies are cost effective, meet user needs and are ready to be, or are close to being, put into the field.

* This report has been submitted by the Co-Chairs of the Standing Committee, Germany and Yemen. This report is the Co-Chairs' summary of the breadth of work undertaken by the Standing Committee during the 2001-2002 Intersessional period. It remains the responsibility of the Co-Chairs and is not a negotiated document.