

DEMINING OF SOMALIA

Geneva

15 May 2003

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Every conflict leaves tragic and long-lasting memory of killed and crippled people, destroyed houses and deserted pastures, hopeless refugees and orphans. Many years of peaceful life should pass before this painful recall of years of war could be cured, though the pain for lost friends and relatives will never gone.

But there is a weapon, which will remind of it dozens of years after the war was over. This weapon won't allow to forget the past, demanding more and more death every day. This weapon does not make distinctions between the soldier and the cattleman, between the old man and the child, between the woman and the man.

This essence of postponed death, this barbarous weapon hidden in the ground is called anti-personnel mines.

Every year about 16 thousand people all over the world are killed or become badly wounded because of explosions of mines, buried in the soil. A lot of Somalis are among them, because several millions of mines are lying in the ground of Somalia for long years: every day Somalis are dying or are becoming cripples for life.

Mine-strewn roads make impossible any traffic. Mine-strewn pastures make impossible tending cattle. Refugees cannot return to the mined houses. Children can not go to mined schools. It is impossible to forget war when you are in the mined country. Mine-strewn earth produces fear.

Mine clearing of Somalia is the most crucial step towards overcoming of consequences of ten years of military actions, chaos and disorder, which ruined the country.

At last, Somali people obtained a Great Hope: now peace negotiations between all factions are successfully going on in Nairobi under the IGAD Mbegati, Kenya peace process with great support and assistance of UN, EU, AU, IGAD, LAS and the whole world community. The efforts of all participants in the peace process create strong expectations for forming of the government of the national unity, which will include all major and minor communities of Somalia.

Without any doubts definite observation of all international treaties, banning the anti-personnel mines – the treaties which are based on Convention of Ottawa

process of 1997 that requires general prohibition of anti-personnel mines and immediate destruction of all their stocks, will be one of the most significant obligation of the new Government of Somalia – at least in a name of thousands of Somali people killed by landmines.

The Demining of Somalia shall be the one of the first and one of the most important tasks of newly established Government of Somalia, moreover it will become a criterion for the responsibility of this new government, and the success of this government of national unity will depend on success of programs of mine clearing: neither economic revival of Somalia, nor personal safety of citizens of Somalia can't be reached before the process of mine clearing is complete.

The economy of our country is destroyed by civil war and mines that lying in Somalia soil are part of this blind destructive force, not allowing to rebuilt Somali agriculture, industry and trade. The liquidation of all anti-personnel mines and all explosive objects buried in the ground will have tremendous economic effect.

According to estimations of international organizations working in Afghanistan, each dollar spent for mine clearing yields about USD 6.40 in economic returns. Cleared roads will provide some USD 250 thousand in economic benefits per 50 km.

All participants of peace process in Nairobi (Kenya), all clans and factions, have joined Geneva Call in November 2002, and the document that is confirming this fact was one of the first documents of Somali Peace Process, signed by all parties. Despite some political differences between various groups and factions at Peace Conference, we all are united on the issue of urgent necessity of the demining of our Country, and mine clearance can and should begin now, even before formation of the government of national unity.

We are sure that only fast demining of vast areas by foreign specialists could be a reliable solution of current situation in Somalia, where each day costs new lives and each day of chaos makes more difficult restoration and development of the country.

Process clearly should also include training programs for a contingent of the Somali sappers – of course, significant part of work of mine clearing will lie down on their shoulders.

However, the formation of this contingent will take time, probably not less than 4-6 months – because National Sapper Corpse cannot be formed on any other basis, except the cornerstone principle of representation of every fraction involved in peace negotiations process.

The mine clearance in Somalia is complicated by complete lack of minefields maps and different types of mines that were used.

Therefore the urgent process of mine fields reconnaissance and mapping, as well as process of mine clearing and mine destruction should be started by foreign specialists as soon as possible.

We were studying the experience of the organizing of demining in different countries and areas, as well as effectiveness of mine clearance there, and we suggest that the experience of some organizations working on mine clearance in Lebanon and methods, applied by specialists of these organizations, will fit the situation in Somalia in a best way.

We have elaborated the preliminary program of the mine clearance and would be very interested to discuss it with demining specialists and related international agencies and organizations in order to implement it as early as possible in a name of people of Somalia.

Somalia is grateful to all international organizations, including agencies of the United Nations and NGOs that put their efforts in mine clearing of the country's territory now. Especially we would mention United Nations Development Programmed, HALO Trust, Danish De-mining Group and others. Somalia also is grateful to the states - donors that finance these noble efforts: to the European Union, Netherlands, and Denmark.

At the same time it is necessary to ascertain that volume of financing provided by international community for means of destruction of anti-personnel mines and mine fields in Somalia is completely insufficient. At 2002 the total amount was **USD 2,485,944**, including **USD 702,914** given by the UN.

For comparison, the program of mine clearing in Afghanistan for 2002 was valued **USD 56,009,413**, including the sum of **USD 26,331,389** sponsored by the UN. About 15 countries, UN agencies and many NGO are participating in this good program. It provides resources not only for mine clearing and destruction of mine stocks, but also for delivery of necessary equipment, including drugs and medical equipment, required for rehabilitation of victims of mines explosions.

We are sure that long-suffering people of Somalia, including Somalia's victims of anti-personnel mines, deserve not less support and sympathy that people of Afghanistan. Hospitals, medical equipment and prosthetic means also needed by them to get the chance of social rehabilitation.

The Future Government of Somalia is obliged to provide the right of innocently injured Somalis for integration into society and for social security.

We call the all international organizations to support Somali people and newly forming Democratic Somalia in destruction of the existing stock piles, mine clearance, as well as in medical social rehabilitation of victims of land mines as a comprehensive package.

God Bless Somalia!

Eng. Hussen Mohamed Aideed
Co-chairman of SRRC Council
Chairman of USC/SNA & SNA
Former President of Somali Republic TNG1996-98
Awarded Ambassador of Peace by IIWFP on February, 2003