

Zimbabwe ~~2006~~

**ZIMBABWE'S STATEMENT ON MINE ACTION TO THE 7<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF STATE PARTIES HELD IN GENEVA 18 - 22 SEPTEMBER 2006**

Thank you <sup>Madam</sup> Mr President for affording me this opportunity to give an update to this important meeting on the progress of mine action in Zimbabwe. <sup>distinguished delegates</sup> Allow <sup>me</sup> me to start by thanking you and the rest of your team for successfully preparing and hosting this meeting. <sup>343</sup> congratulate you on your election as President of this meeting

It gives me pleasure to report progress achieved since <sup>as</sup> the last meeting in Zagreb ~~in~~ last year. Perhaps before I provide current information in as far as Mine Action in Zimbabwe is concerned, <sup>Let</sup> me start by reminding this meeting that Zimbabwe has a National Mine Action Plan which is already being implemented. By year 2005, almost 50% of all mined areas had been cleared from a total of over 700km stretch of minefields. ~~The national plan prioritise clearing of mines, complemented by mine risk education and victim assistance.~~ The clearance plan ~~is~~ currently being executed ~~but~~ is facing challenges of shortage of financial resources and equipment. The plan was based on the premise that the country was going to receive additional support from willing partners which unfortunately has not been forthcoming. It follows therefore that all mine clearance efforts are going to be executed by <sup>the</sup> Army Deminers using national <sup>available</sup> but inadequate resources to try and meet our deadline in year 2009. Much as we are encouraged by the progress made so far, it is important to be realistic and acknowledge that we still have a very difficult task ahead of us in order to meet the deadline. <sup>It</sup> took us 7 intensive years to clear half the mined areas, it may take us much longer to clear the remainder due to dwindling resources. In short, my country is way behind schedule in its mine action plan due to limited resources.

As Zimbabwe reported to the Standing Committee meetings here <sup>in</sup> May, ~~this~~ <sup>last</sup> year, a team of Army Deminers are ~~still~~ <sup>currently</sup> deployed clearing the 70km double stretch Sango Border Post to Crooks Corner minefield <sup>in</sup> the South Eastern Lowveld ~~along our border with South Africa and Mozambique.~~ To date over 600 000m<sup>2</sup> has been cleared with over 200 mines destroyed so far. ~~The government of Zimbabwe provided over all the resources for this operation and funding is steadily being increased in order to provide more resources to this operation though still inadequate.~~

Let me reiterate that it is practically impossible to meet our deadline in year 2009 using national resources. <sup>We</sup> are left with no option but to revise ~~the~~ <sup>whole</sup> National Mine Action Plan. In essence, my country is considering applying for an extension of the deadline for Zimbabwe by a number of still to be determined basing on the rate of clearance <sup>currently</sup> being achieved. This application will be finalised and forwarded through the appropriate channels

~~in due course.~~ We therefore welcome the current discussions aimed at seeking ways to allow mine affected countries that are not in a position to meet their deadlines. *to seek extensions.*

In as far as the rehabilitation and reintegration of landmine survivors is concerned, my country has still a lot to do. The major development in this area is a landmine impact survey which is going to be undertaken in the last quarter of this year in the country. This survey is going to provide <sup>hopeful</sup> the statistics of <sup>well</sup> the survivors, their locations, needs, possible networks, ~~and self help projects to mention but a few of the objectives.~~ This project is being funded by UNDP through the country's Department of Civil Protection. ~~Previously the survivors would just be treated in local hospitals and discharged, with a few of them getting minimal assistance from the government.~~ Most of these survivors are located in far remote areas which are difficult to access. Other than UNDP, <sup>NGO</sup> other organisation has or is contemplating assisting <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ landmine survivors <sup>as of</sup> ~~as of~~ now.

Currently, there are several mine risk education campaigns going on in Zimbabwe. In the past ~~12~~ <sup>24</sup> months, 15 people died after detonating mines in areas closer to the minefields. There certainly could <sup>be</sup> more cases which went unreported since almost all mined areas <sup>are</sup> ~~are~~ closer to the border, which ~~is~~ <sup>are</sup> remote and difficult to access. These alarming figures were provided by the local police and all occurred on a partial, cleared 130km stretch of ~~the~~ ~~Musengezi to Rwenya~~ minefield on our North Eastern border. Let me say that this is the reason why a wholistic land mine impact survey is to be launched this year.

I will not say much about our stock pile destruction which we conducted in November 2000 but suffice to say my country retained 700 anti-personnel mines for use in the training of our own troops and assisting deminers on training. This training will enable identification of these mines, detection, neutralising and destruction of the mines. None of these were destroyed during this training. This year alone over 200 Army deminers were trained using the retained mines mainly in detection techniques, identification and neutralisation process.

In conclusion Madam Chair, much as Zimbabwe welcomes the current efforts aimed at seeking ways for mine affected countries to extend their deadlines under Article 5, we believe we should also critically assess why ~~every~~ <sup>mine affected</sup> member state ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> going to fail to meet its deadline. In short, we need to re-strategise our approach, if the Convention is to be a success story that it has been so far. ~~We on our part remain committed to full compliance with our obligations to the Convention despite the major challenges we are facing to do so.~~ ~~to the end.~~ <sup>to the end.</sup>