

SUBMISSION BY ZIMBABWE ON THE PROGRESS IN FULFILLING ARTICLE 5 OBLIGATIONS TO THE INTER – SESSIONAL MEETING: 27 MAY 2009

1. **Preamble** I want to start by acknowledging the good job being done by the co – chairs and also expressing gratitude for giving me the floor to update this conference on the progress made so far by my country from the time our extension request was granted. Specifically Zimbabwe requested for twenty two months that is up to March 2011. I am sure we all remember that during the time we requested for extension our county was going through an unprecedented political and economic turmoil making it difficult, even for the most ardent humanitarian activist to provide assistance to our demining efforts. We are aware of what caused the turmoil but it's no good for anybody to go into it again. As we might all know a new dispensation was born in February this year and as we speak now we have an inclusive government in place in Zimbabwe. February is only three months back and like any new set – up settling down time should be allowed. It is our hope that we should see things moving again within a short space of time. Let me also hasten to ask all of us to be optimistic and render our support to the inclusive government; a vote of confidence they so much need especially by the international community.

2. **Progress** Since 9MSP, progress has been made in the training of more 35 military humanitarian deminers complementing the already existing ones to give a total of 167. Unfortunately, demining operations have not started owing to resource constraints caused by an adverse economic situation which I hope we will be out of very soon. We have put most of the requirements in place to commence operations on the 8th of June 2009. Reduction in the total amount of mined area since the 9MSP was very insignificant. It is hoped that a remarkable progress will be made before year end 2009 as one civilian demining company, Might Hope Demining Service International (MHDSI), has entered into a contract with us to demine the Sango Border Post to Crooks Corner minefield on humanitarian basis. The contract entered is renewable after a period of twelve months and the company is allocated a portion of 10km at a time before proceeding to the next portion to allow for quality control and assurance. Quality control and assurance will be undertaken by military deminers as ZIMAC by itself has no capacity. As contained in the contract document MHDSI shall also engage in other mine action programmes such as MRE, and EOD in communities within a radius of 10km from the minefield. The company is set to start operations by the end of June.

3. **Possibility of Achieving Objectives.** Zimbabwe could still achieve its objectives for 2009 if the efforts we are putting in getting assistance locally and internationally pay divides. The new government started off on a positive note but has a lot of pressing issues on its table. We had hoped that we were going to be able to put our case to them early enough so that the new

government would put demining as one of its top priorities but unfortunately that was not be due to reasons beyond our control. We are going to use the project launch by MHDSI to project our case to potential supporters within the country. We were hoping that UNDP would have delivered survey equipment we ordered through them by now but we are still waiting. We had arranged to train twenty land mine surveyors but we had to suspend the course pending receipt of that equipment. If we get the equipment within the next three months, it would be possible for us to carry out the surveys and continue with demining operations as per our plan.

4. **Possibility of International Assistance.** We have also made efforts to engage international organizations to assist us and on this we are very grateful to Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) Mine Action Department and the HALO Trust who have shown interest and we are hoping that as the situation improves in my country these initially discussions we had with them will come to fruition.

5. **Conclusion** While we have a new political dispensation at home, it is still rather too early for any progress to have been registered. We should be starting demining in the next week and the civilian company we contracted should start operations by the end of June which should see us clearing a larger area this year, than would have been the case with military humanitarian deminers only. If UNDP delivers the survey equipment within the next three months, then we should be able train the surveyors and deploy them before the end of the year. Our meeting the target on our extension request is premised on us getting international support and there are positive indications which means by March 2011, we should have a clear picture of the full extent of our problem and what requires to be done in order to rid the country of anti – personnel land mines.

I thank you