

Thank you madam Co chair for giving me the floor.

Excellencies

Distinguish colleagues

Ladies and gentlemen,

The total area of contamination in Iraq is still not known, however the Iraq Landmine Impact Survey conducted in 13 out of 18 governorates from 2004 till 2006, discovered 1,622 communities affected, with 3,673 separate areas suspected of being contaminated or hazardous. In total, it is believed that 1,730 square kilometers of land are contaminated, impacting the livelihoods and safety of more than 1.6 million Iraqis.

This contamination constitutes one of Iraq's largest public safety concerns and is an impediment to development efforts as it impedes the delivery of humanitarian assistance, basic services, hampers development projects, and negatively affects the country's environment.

Unexploded ordnance and landmines deny access to agricultural land, prevent the return of internally displaced people and refugees to their communities, and deprive whole families of income when their breadwinners are maimed or killed. They hinder reconstruction, endanger the safety of the general public, and prevent the use of roads, water resources and residential areas.

Landmines are only a small part of Iraq's total explosive remnants of war problems, cluster bombs also pose even a greater danger as according to the Handicap International Report of May 2007, 50 million cluster submunitions were used in Iraq between 1991 and 2006.

Iraq is committed to clear all anti-personnel landmines in contaminated areas by February 2018. However, currently, there are an estimated less than 2000 deminers active in Iraq. In order to meet that deadline, it is estimated that Iraq would require more than 19,000 deminers.

It is clear that the current demining capacities in Iraq are far from meeting the requirements of the Mine Ban Convention, and there is an urgent need for the development of a nation-wide Mine Action Programme and increasing national capacities.

This much-needed capacity increase can only be met by enabling the Iraqi with the necessary assistance to enhancing the governmental institutions including the regulatory authority and clear the country of mines and explosive remnants of war ensuring the safety of people and reintegration of victims into the society, as well as allowing reconstruction and development to take place in a safe environment.

In spite of these challenges, Government of Iraq has repeatedly demonstrated strong commitment to strengthening Iraq's own capacity to counter threats from landmines and

explosive remnants of war. Our focus on reviewing and developing a regulatory framework, institutions and strategies for Mine Action, as well as meeting the obligations under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, are a few of the many clear indicators of our strong commitment to improving the situation.

The role played by the international community to assist Iraq to deal with the mine and explosive remnants of war situation is recognized and greatly appreciated. It is hoped that this cooperation and assistance will increase, as the existing demining and clearance capacities in Iraq remain grossly inadequate to solve this problem.

Thank you madam co-chair.