

LEBANON

04 - Dec - 2009

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Mrs. President,

Allow me first, to congratulate you on your election as President of this conference, and to wish you success in your arduous endeavors. At the same time, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the Government of Columbia for hosting this conference.

Mrs. President.

Since many years now, the Lebanese people have been suffering from the devastating effects of mines, cluster munitions and ERW.

During the civil war, anti-personnel and anti-tank mines were laid along confrontation lines throughout the country. It is estimated that 50,000 mines remain from this tragic conflict.

However, it is the aftermath of the liberation of the South of Lebanon in 2000 and the 2006 Israelis hostilities that has caused the greatest contamination. After years of dedicated clearances, it is estimated that 375,000 mines remain along the

Blue Line, the UN laid border between Lebanon and Occupied Palestine, and 18 million square meters of cluster munitions contaminated land remains to be cleared. This equates to 45% of the original land contaminated.

In addition to the severe socioeconomic damages, the human consequences of contaminated land are great. Lebanon has seen more than 3866 victims since the end of the civil war. The number of victims significantly grew after 2000 and 2006 hostilities when Lebanese, returning to their villages and farms, had their lives forever damaged by these indiscriminate weapons, less than a doorstep away from their homes or maybe inside their houses.

Mrs. President

Lebanon is one of the founding members of the United Nations Organization, as well as a major contributor in drafting the Universal Declaration of human rights in 1948. Lebanon completely believes in the supremacy of the human rights, global peace, and international law.

The Lebanon Mine Action Centre of the Lebanese Armed Forces is in charge of national mine action operations and coordinates these activities up to the international standards, and as acknowledged by the United Nations.

The work of this Center has undergone significant progress. Allow me Mrs. President to briefly expose some illustrations:

- Demining of affected areas: Thanks to the cooperation of several donor countries, the United Nations, international and national NGOs, the Lebanon Mine Action Center succeeded in clearing 113.3 million square meters out of 203 million square meters of contaminated land (about 55%), and destroying 125.000 anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, and approximately 200.000 CBs, and hundreds of thousands of UXOs. Currently, the Lebanon Mine Action Centre is developing plans to clear all Israeli emplaced minefields north of the UNIFIL patrol road in the Blue Line area.
- Implementing of a National Risk Reduction and Mine Risk Education Campaign: This Campaign

reached approximately in 2008 one hundred thousand students, these represent approximately 50% of the registered students in south Lebanon and other regions, and around 500,000 citizens out of 800,000 current inhabitants of contaminated communities. The National MRE Campaign in Lebanon is managed by the LMAC and is delivered by the civil society together with LMAC staff, in coordination with the Lebanon Ministry of Education and Higher Learning and all those concerned.

- Establishment of a National Mine Victim Assistance Committee: Actions undertaken by this committee are in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health and other concerned ministries, The Lebanese Red cross, the Council of the South, hundreds of volunteers and local and international NGOs. They all joined effort to provide assistance to victims. Despite scarce resources, several workshops and training centers deliver rehabilitation services, allowing the victims to reintegrate back into the society and to actively participate in economic activities.

As a matter of fact, the Lebanon Mine Action Center believes in the rights of the disabled people and calls on all donors to help us continue delivering decent and adequate needed services to them.

Mrs. President

Regardless of the fact that Israel refuses to accede to the Ottawa or Oslo Conventions in order to escape its obligations towards peace and human rights, and has as recently as 2006 hostilities contaminated large areas of Lebanon with cluster munitions, Lebanon will not follow that same path. Lebanon understands the tragic consequences that cluster munitions and anti-personnel mines have on civilian populations. Lebanon has signed the Oslo treaty and hopes to sign the Ottawa Convention in the future.

Mrs. President,

Lebanon has never produced or exported anti-personnel mines, and has attended, as an observer, almost every meeting at States Parties since the Ottawa treaty was signed. Lebanon is cooperating with the Landmine Monitor and provides it with all the requested information. Lebanon, here again, confirms his beliefs in the principle of the Ottawa Convention and its noble objectives, and looks forward to joining the Mine Ban Treaty.

Finally,

Lebanon calls on the United Nations and the International Community

- to support our clearance, MRE and MVA efforts with technical, financial and procedural advances in order to facilitate and accelerate work;
- to support the government in implementing its ambitious development plans in order to find, clear, and reconstruct the affected areas

- to help the displaced population to return to their villages and their field, back to their normal life, in order to contribute to the economic cycle, Lebanon development and growth,
- and hence, to free Lebanon of these 'silent killers'.

Thank you

