

## **PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 5 BY AFGHANISTAN**

### **I. Progress in implementation**

1. Afghanistan reported that it released 355 mined areas in 2017, addressing 30,526,213 square metres, 1,729,047 square metres cancelled, 948,213 square metres reduced and 27,848,953 square metres cleared, destroying 14,624 anti-personnel mines, 286 anti-tank mines, 42,820 items of unexploded ordnance and 19 cluster munitions. The Committee observed that the information provided by Afghanistan was disaggregated according to area cancelled, reduced and cleared.
2. The Committee observed that the information provided allowed for comparability with that provided in Afghanistan's 2012 extension request. The Committee noted that between April 2013 and 31 December 2017, the number of confirmed (CHA) and suspected hazardous areas (SHA) had been reduced from 3,439 to 2,130 and the total area from 266.4 square kilometres to 224.6 square kilometres.
3. The Committee welcomed Afghanistan employing the Guide to Reporting adopted by the Fourteenth Meeting of the States Parties (14MSP) in reporting on progress in implementation.

### **II. Clarity regarding remaining challenge**

4. The Committee observed that Afghanistan had provided clarity regarding its remaining challenge by providing a summary list of the remaining areas known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines, including the estimated extent of the contamination in each region of the country. Afghanistan reported a total of 2,130 mined areas totalling 224,668,487 square metres remaining to be addressed, including 1,833 CHAs totalling 127,064,652 square metres and 297 SHAs measuring 97,603,835 square metres.
5. The Committee recalled in conclusions presented by the Committee to the Sixteenth Meeting of States Parties in 2017 that, in addition to anti-personnel mines, anti-tank mines and other explosive remnants of war also pose extreme risks to the civilian population and to the implementation of development activities. In this regard, the Committee observed that Afghanistan's effort to implement Article 5 was only part of the totality of efforts required to address explosive hazards in Afghanistan. The Committee noted the importance of Afghanistan continuing to disaggregate the challenge of anti-personnel mine contamination.
6. The Committee observed that, with survey activities ongoing, the remaining challenge in Afghanistan could be further clarified by presenting more precise information, including the use of the Guide to Reporting.

### **III. National plans for clearance and survey**

7. Afghanistan provided a detailed plan in its 2012 extension request leading towards completion, with it clearly indicating what geographical and quantified results are expected when, how, by whom and at what cost. The Committee noted that progress in 2017 did not reach projection outputs for clearance and survey. The Committee also observed that Afghanistan had reported an additional 92.7 square kilometres of mined areas identified through non-technical survey.
8. The Committee noted that Afghanistan provided an updated projection of outputs for clearance and survey in each of the seven administrative regions contaminated with anti-personnel mines from 2018 to 2022, with an overall goal for Afghanistan to address 1,866 confirmed and suspect

hazardous areas measuring 200,533,936 square metres, as follows: 63,944,350 square metres to be addressed in 2018, 36,618,050 square metres to be addressed in 2019, 45,294,509 square metres to be addressed in 2020, 30,090,847 square metres to be addressed in 2021, and 24,586,180 square metres to be addressed in 2022.

9. The Committee noted that, while Afghanistan anticipates releasing a considerable amount of area and number of areas annually leading to its deadline in 2022, the number of areas, (1,866) and amount of area (200,533,936 square metres), falls short of the number of areas (2,130) and amount of area, (224,668,487 square metres), that Afghanistan has reported as remaining to be addressed. In this regard the Committee noted the commitment of Afghanistan to review the work plan on a continuous basis and that Afghanistan and the States Parties as a whole would benefit if Afghanistan could inform the States Parties of changes to the work plan, including on the impact of new hazards and re-survey on current capacities, annual clearance and survey plans.

#### **IV. Efficient and expedient implementation**

10. Afghanistan reported that the Afghanistan Mine Action Standards (AMAS 05.01 Land Release) were amended and updated in July 2013 right after the release of the IMAS 07.11 for land release. These AMAS were reviewed by the AMAS Review Board and approved for application in Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA). Subsequently, the SOPs of all demining organisations have been revised based on the requirements of these new AMAS and approved by DMAC. The Committee noted that Afghanistan had attached the relevant AMAS chapter to their Article 7 report.

#### **V. Actions in accordance with plans in extension requests and decisions on them**

11. The Committee recalled that the 12MSP had requested Afghanistan to provide updates with respect to a variety of commitments made and milestones contained in its extension request. The Committee observed that Afghanistan was acting upon the decisions of the 12MSP by providing updates relative to annual milestones for progress as contained in its extension request.
12. The Committee noted that Afghanistan's Mine/ERW Impact Free Community Survey (MEIFCS) was not conducted in 2017 due to a lack of funds. Afghanistan reported that MEIFCS remains to be implemented in 110 remaining districts.

#### **VI. Mine risk reduction**

13. Afghanistan reported in detail on the actions it has taken to effectively exclude the population from areas known or suspected to contain anti-personnel mines. The Committee noted that this included ensuring appropriate marking of hazardous areas, as well as providing mine risk education (MRE) to people living in the mine- and other ERW-impacted communities. Afghanistan reported nine international and local organisations were actively engaged in delivering MRE sessions, with a specific focus on returnees, scrap metal collectors, aid workers and internally displaced people.
14. The Committee noted the actions taken by Afghanistan in Mine Risk Education and noted these activities are age-appropriate and gender-sensitive, coherent with applicable national and international standards, and tailored to the needs of mine-affected communities and integrated into ongoing mine action activities, namely data gathering, clearance and victim assistance as appropriate.

