



## **The Eighteenth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction**

### **Agenda Item: 7. General exchange of views (continued)**

Mr. President,

At the outset I would like to commend the excellent manner in which you lead the work of the Convention and to appreciate your team for facilitating this meeting despite the extraordinary circumstances.

Sri Lanka will be pleased to join the Article 5 Implementation Committee exemplifying Sri Lanka's strong commitment to advancing as well as contributing to the universal realisation of the salutary objectives of the Convention.

Mr. President,

For Sri Lanka, this meeting represents an important opportunity to present an outline of the progress we have made in mine action as well as the path ahead in the direction of achieving mine-free status, with the continued support of our partners and implementing agencies.

The three decade-long conflict in Sri Lanka left many areas in the Northern and Eastern parts of the country contaminated by anti-personnel mines. As per the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database, 1310.7 Sq. Km of Suspected Hazardous Area have been identified since year 2002. In the aftermath of the conflict, mine clearance was a primary concern for Sri Lanka. Humanitarian demining in Sri Lanka by the Sri Lanka Army was continuing even when the conflict was ongoing as early as in 2002 and even during the height of the conflict between years 2005 – 2009. Since 2002 up to now, hazards area covering 1,294.8 km<sup>2</sup> have been cleared and released for resettlement purposes.

While Sri Lanka has set the target of becoming mine – free by 2020, various practical constrains, including inadequate funding has delayed the achievement of the target. We remain committed on the path to make Sri Lanka mine-free through sustained national efforts. Since 2015 up to now 24 Sq.km have been newly identified as contaminated area and recorded in IMSMA database. Accordingly 15.90 Sq.Km of suspected and confirmed hazardous area remains to be cleared as at October 2020. Needless to say, the unprecedented circumstances of the pandemic have also had a negative impact on the progress of mine clearance.

Sri Lanka is currently in the process of reviewing the national mine action strategy accordingly. When the strategy is reviewed, the NMAC will reach out to the donor community for funding assistance for timely achievement of the goal of mine free status. It is also important to establish a suitable demobilization process for the employed demining cadre and a pilot survey in this regard is already underway.

We appreciate and acknowledge the assistance provided by UK, USA, Canada, Australia, Japan, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, Russia, China and other partners, to effectively take forward the mine action programme in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka currently possesses 32,831 stockpiled anti-personal mines of which a demolition plan has been prepared to demolish 12,000 stockpiled anti-personal mines by the end of 2020. The balance 20,831 stockpiled anti-personal mines will be used for training purposes permitted under Article 3 of the Convention.

The NMAC considers Mine Risk Education as an important pillar of demining activities. Age-appropriate risk-reduction education has been incorporated into the school curriculum in the Northern and Eastern provinces. However, due to the depletion of funds the frequency of the MRE activities has been reduced. If the required level of funds are provided through the NMAC, the resumption of MRE which is a timely requirement would be possible and would be of great assistance to the community.

Injury Surveillance System established and rolled out by the Ministry has been further expanded to 126 hospitals up to now. Further NMAC itself has allocated Rs.16 Mn to assist victims of landmines. A total 200 million rupees will be committed by the government for demining related activities in the year 2021.

In conclusion Mr. President, Sri Lanka will continue to make steady progress towards the goal of mine free status and stands ready to share our experiences and best practices to help countries in de-mining endeavours.

Thank you!