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Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA)

BAMIYAN WORLD HERITAGE SITES DECLARED MINE FREE

Kabul, 28 September 2009: The Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) has declared the four remaining Suspected Hazardous Areas in important archaeological areas of the World Heritage site in Bamiyan free from mines and other Explosive Remnants of War (ERW).

These sites were officially handed over in presence of government officials, UN agencies, donors, media and other partners through a ceremony in Ghulghula City, one of the historical sites on 26th September 2009. During this gathering the Deputy Minister of information and culture, Director of Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA), UNESCO representative, donors and partners delivered speeches.

Dr. Mohammad Haider Reza, programme director of MACCA said: "I am proud of all those who have worked together to make this unusual collaboration so successful. This is the first time in Afghanistan when two very different disciplines – demining and archaeology – have worked together to deliver a result which is of such great value to Afghanistan."

Mr. Brenden Cassar, Cultural Specialist, UNESCO said: "This is my first time participating in such a great gathering of releasing world heritage sites free of mines and other explosive remnants of war. Now we have the access to the sites needed to conserve them as well as the possibility of archaeological research and tourism."

There were 21 Suspected Hazardous Areas in the centre of Bamiyan, of which 17 were cleared of mines and other explosive remnants of war in 2008. All villages (146) in the centre of Bamiyan were also searched for mines and other ERW through village by village clearance activity. The remaining four historical areas which have now been completed required a specialist approach and archaeological support from UNESCO.

Demining in the historical areas began in September 2008 and restarted in May 2009 after a break for winter. UNESCO provided technical training and oversight with the Afghan authorities



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for the deminers to ensure this process did not damage or in any way harm the preservation of these historically fragile and valuable areas. The demining operations in these sites resulted in the clearance of 422,216 sq m of contaminated area and the destruction of 14 anti personnel mines and 7,380 ERW. A number of small ancient artifacts were also discovered during the clearance operation which are currently being stored and catalogued by UNESCO in support of the Ministry of Information and Culture.

Demining operations also started in Shiber and Kahmard districts of Bamyan this year and the whole province is expected to be declared free of mines and other explosive remnants of war by end of demining season next year.

Press contacts/ Photography available from:

Contact: Flora Sutherland/ Rafiullah Alkozai

T: 0777-966-371/ 0777-966-372

Email: flora@unmaca.org/ Rafiullah@unmaca.org

About the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan

The concept of humanitarian mine action was developed in Afghanistan in 1988/9. Mine action encompasses all pillars of mine action: advocacy, demining (survey, marking and clearance), stockpile destruction, mine risk education (MRE), and victim assistance (VA). The programme is funded both bilaterally and through the UN Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF).

Collectively known as the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA), mine action implementers in Afghanistan form one of the largest mine action programmes in the world. Together, these agencies have a twenty year history of successfully delivering mine action in Afghanistan and have cleared over 12,000 hazard areas throughout the country. The MAPA is coordinated by the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA), which is funded through a UN modality. The MACCA has sub-offices, known as Area Mine Action Centres (AMACs) in Parwan, Herat, Jalalabad, Mazar, Kunduz, Gardez, and Kandahar.