



The Government of Afghanistan Calls on the International Community to Continue Supporting Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan

The Second Vice President of Afghanistan, His Excellency Mohammad Karim Khalili writes to the attention of the Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York to support the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan (MAPA) in order to achieve the Ottawa Treaty deadline of "2023, Afghanistan Mine Free".

Afghanistan acceded to the Ottawa Anti-personnel (AP) Mine Ban Treaty in September 2002, making a commitment to clear all emplaced AP mines within ten years. The magnitude of the mine problem in Afghanistan, tied with the ongoing conflict, and under funding, however, has meant that the initial deadline of 2013 was untenable. In March 2012, the Afghan Government submitted a request for a ten-year extension of the deadline to remove all AP mines by 2023, which was accepted by all parties.

Unfortunately this year funding of the MAPA has fallen by 25% compared to last year; which puts at risk Afghanistan's commitment to bring the mine problem to an end by 2023.

"I appeal to your government to consider supporting mine action in Afghanistan. Funds can be channeled to the programme through the Afghan Ministry of Finance, through the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Mine Action or directly to the implementing partners." said the Afghan Vice President.

On November 1, the Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Mr. Mohammad Taqi Khalili in his remarks before the General Assembly noted the remaining problem, the number of Afghans still being killed and injured and echoed the Vice President's appeal for funds *"Without UNMAS and the International Community's continuing technical and financial support, Afghanistan will not be able to emancipate itself from the threat of landmines."* Further adding his *"profound regret for the lives lost and the lives shattered by landmines, Explosive Remnants of War and IEDs. These weapons are the greatest threat and enemy to the lives of human beings and I extend my sincere sympathies and condolences to their brave families."*

In partnership with the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), who have been a valuable partner since 2002; the MAPA has had a great deal of progress over the past 24 years of mine action operations in Afghanistan. To date, MAPA has released 22,029 hazards covering 1,893 sq km area, through surveys and clearance operations. As a result, 124 districts and 2,351 communities are no longer affected by known landmines and ERW. In addition to the clearance operations, in order to mitigate persisting risks, MAPA delivers Mine/ERW risk education to the communities with particular focus on children who have been the most frequent victims of mines and ERW.

The problem doesn't end here though; there are still 4,510 hazards covering 521 sq km area, affecting 1,628 communities. Every month averagely 40 civilian casualties of mine/ERW are recorded in Afghanistan. Therefore, we call on the international community to pay attention to this vital need of Afghan people and the call of Afghan government for supporting of mine action in Afghanistan.

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