

07 July 2009

Statement on the Occasion of the Dushanbe Workshop on Mine Action

Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives and Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you for inviting me today to say a few words from a donor perspective!

First, Germany would like to thank the Tajik government for hosting this valuable workshop which will help to pave the way toward a mine free Tajikistan. In particular I would like to take the opportunity to also thank the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) and all like-minded organizations for their long and impressive fight against anti-personnel mines and other explosive remnants of war.

By any standard, the Ottawa Convention is a remarkable and unique achievement not only in international disarmament but also in international humanitarian law and in humanitarian and development cooperation. The Convention has become an unparalleled success story since it opened for signature more than a decade ago. It is realistic to believe that a world without the impact of anti-personnel mines could be achievable in years rather than in decades. This is a great and unexpected success because it was assumed that it would take decades or even centuries to reduce the problem to an acceptable level.

The German Government has been actively involved in the anti-personnel mine ban movement since the mid nineties. Our commitment has been confirmed by the some 250 million USD we have granted bilaterally to 42 mine affected countries thus far. This amount does not include our share of the European Commission budget for mine action which is some 100 million USD. In total the German tax payers have expressed their commitment to mine action by granting some 350 million USD since 1992 which makes Germany one of the biggest donors world-wide.

In 2008/2009 alone some 46 million USD will be granted bilaterally to 22 countries world-wide.

While generally speaking all effected regions are equally important.. Our mine action funding is directed with strong preference to States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty. Up to now, the Asian region has received the strongest support . Since 2006 the Tajik mine action activities have been supported with 3.8 Mi USD.

We have already spoken about a possible reduction of available funds in the future. From a donor perspective, I would like to point out that a shift in thinking is urgently required. Governments of affected countries need to demonstrate that they are prepared to take determined steps towards national ownership. Increasingly, the major challenge will be to shift the weight of effort from externally managed mechanisms and international organisations to affected states and governments, whilst maintaining sufficient international funding.

Building efficient local capacities and slim management structures is of the utmost importance, since the responsibility for Mine Action lie exclusively within the affected countries. In the long term, far reaching national ownership is, the key to success of the Ottawa Convention.

We are pleased that mine action programmes in Afghanistan and Tajikistan have made significant progress in recent years: In Afghanistan the national authorities represented by the Mine Action Centre Afghanistan demonstrably have taken on the coordinating role. The significant increase in efficiency and effectiveness has led to remarkable results which give rise to the hope that the country will potentially be freed from landmines within the next five to ten years.

Though the difficult topographical conditions cause serious challenges, the Tajik mine action programme seems to be heading in the right direction. The close cooperation between the Tajik authorities and FSD as the implementing partner has payed off and as a consequence the vision of a country free from the impact of landmines is within reach.. This is a remarkable and encouraging achievement and I can assure you that the German Government will stay committed to realizing this goal.

Thank you very much