



The Bangkok Workshop on Achieving a Mine-Free South-East Asia

1-3 April 2009

Chair's Summary

1. The Bangkok Workshop on Achieving a Mine-Free South East Asia was held from 1-3 April 2009 in Bangkok, Thailand. Financial support for the workshop was provided by the European Union through its "Joint Action" in support of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and with the organizational and substantive support provided by the Convention's Implementation Support Unit. The purpose of the Bangkok Workshop was to take stock of the progress made and challenges that remain in South East Asia in pursuing the aims of the Convention. In doing so, it was intended that the workshop would contribute significantly to the success of the Convention's Second Review Conference to be held in Cartagena, Colombia from 30 November to 4 December 2009.
2. The workshop, which was chaired by H.E. Sihasak Phuangkitkeow, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations Office in Geneva, featured the participation of the following ASEAN Member States, neighbouring States and other States: Australia, Belgium, Cambodia, Canada, Colombia, Czech Republic, Indonesia, the Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Thailand, United States of America and Vietnam. In addition, the following international and non-governmental organizations took part in the workshop: European Commission, European Council Secretariat, the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) and several of its member organizations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Thai Campaign to Ban Landmines (TCBL) and several of its member organizations, the UNDP, UNICEF and the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS).
3. The workshop featured a high level opening session which included the participation of H.E. Kasit Piromya, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand. In his address to the workshop, the Minister of Foreign Affairs invited South East Asian neighbours who have not yet joined the Convention to do so. In addition to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the following took part in the opening event: H.E. Ambassador Ivan Hotek of the Czech Republic, representing the European Union Presidency; Dr. Andreas Strub, Coordinator of the Office of the Personal Representative of the European Union's High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy; H.E. Ambassador Jürg Streuli of Switzerland, President of the Ninth Meeting of the States Parties of the AP Mine Ban Convention; and, Mr. Tun Channareth, Ambassador of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.
4. The Implementation Support Unit and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines set the scene for the workshop's thematic items by providing, respectively, an overview of the Convention and its status and views on the pursuit of the Convention's aims in South East Asia. General remarks that followed on the part of several delegations highlighted both the central role of cooperation and assistance in ensuring the success of the Convention and the value of a collective effort on the part of all States Parties in preparing for the Second Review Conference.
5. The workshop's thematic discussions on the pursuit of the aim on clearing all mined areas highlighted the need for States Parties and other affected States to consider applying the full range of technical and non-technical methods in releasing, with confidence, areas suspected to contain anti-personnel mines. In



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presentations made by Cambodia, Thailand and Sri Lanka, and in informal statements made by the Lao PDR and Vietnam, the status of the application of various demining, technical survey and non-technical land release methods was shared. Moreover, these States' inputs to the workshop emphasised that while in each country case significant progress has been made, many challenges remain. These challenges include large amounts of contamination, declining funding, and the fact that mines and other explosive remnants of war still claim many victims.

6. The workshop placed a heavy emphasis on the aim of assisting the victims in part through a parallel programme organized for health care, rehabilitation and reinsertion experts. This involved field visits and workshop sessions in both Chiang Mai and Bangkok. The parallel programme addressed issues including challenges and lessons learned in addressing the rights and needs of mine survivors and other persons with disabilities, emergency and continuing medical care, legislation and policies, psychosocial support and economic empowerment, and priorities for the period after the Second Review Conference. Several experts commented on the value of meeting at the regional level to share experiences and good practices in addressing the rights and needs of persons with disabilities and the need to strengthen these networks in the future.
7. While the importance of cooperation and assistance was highlighted during every workshop session, a specific opportunity was provided for international organizations and donor States to share information and contribute views. The European Commission highlighted its approach to cooperation and assistance, noting in particular the importance of affected States themselves in clarifying that they attach a high priority to addressing implementation challenges. Others also remarked on the need for national ownership in ensuring successful cooperation. The United Nations Mine Action Team recalled the breadth of support that can be provided by or through a number of UN departments, agencies and services. In addition, donor States such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Norway informed the workshop of their ongoing efforts to sustain support to mine affected States.
8. Through expert presentations provided by the ICRC and the Implementation Support Unit, the Convention's obligations to establish national implementation legislation and to be transparent in implementation were recalled. It was noted that several States Parties have not yet reported either that they have adopted relevant legislation or that they view existing legislation as sufficient. In addition, States Parties were reminded that all States Parties are obliged to provide, by 30 April 2009, an updated transparency report covering calendar year 2008.
9. Several delegations joined the appeal made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand for additional States in the region to accede to the Convention in time for the Second Review Conference. The Lao PDR reiterated its commitment to become a party to the Convention and that it would consider an interim step of voluntarily submitting transparency information.
10. Representatives of the President-Designate and of the Secretary-General-Designate of the Second Review Conference – the *Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World* – presented to the workshop their respective visions for the Second Review Conference. It was noted in particular that the Second Review Conference and the year leading up to it present the States Parties with a variety of opportunities, including to:
 - Communicate the impressive progress that has been made towards a mine free world and focus on the remaining challenges for the full implementation of and compliance with the Convention.



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- Focus the world's attention on the humanitarian essence of the Convention: the rights of people and our commitment to survivors and to mine-affected communities.
 - Remember that anti-personnel mines is a living problem with socio-economic consequences which cause great suffering and pain to people in several countries.
 - Make sure that women, men, girls and boys affected by landmines are heard and involved.
 - Reinvigorate national implementation and compliance efforts and enhance national ownership.
 - Promote the international norm created by the Convention that use of anti-personnel mines is prohibited and unacceptable, continuing the universalisation efforts.
 - Encourage further international cooperation towards strengthening human security.
11. It was noted that in order to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the Second Review Conference, States Parties and others were encouraged to participate in the *Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World* at the highest possible level, to make the relevance of the Second Review Conference known to a wide audience around the world, and to work tirelessly to ensure progress in universalisation, stockpile destruction, mine clearance, victim assistance, transparency reporting and national legislation in time for the Second Review Conference.
 12. The chair concluded that the Bangkok Workshop on Achieving a Mine-Free South East Asia had indeed succeeded in fulfilling the aim of generating a regional contribution to preparations for the Convention's Second Review Conference. A particular contribution from South East Asia would be that the Second Review Conference could be used to reinvigorate cooperation and assistance in the life of the Convention. The chair noted that the need for this was especially apparent in South East Asia where great progress in achieving the Convention's aims has been made but where the problems caused by anti-personnel mines and other explosive remnants of war persist. Innovative ways and means to acquire assistance are needed, including but certainly not limited to viewing mine action in the context of development.
 13. Given the gravity of the remaining challenges in South East Asia, the chair concluded that countries in the region must take the lead in using the most expedient and efficient means available to release suspected mined areas. In addition, the chair remarked that, in a region where large numbers of women, men, girls and boys have been left disabled as a result of mines and other explosive remnants of war, South East Asian States, with the support of others, must do what they can to ensure an equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities and to guarantee their rights.
 14. Finally, the chair concluded by echoing the sentiment expressed by many that the world would be a better place if additional States in the region joined the common effort to end the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines, in particular by acceding to the Convention in time for the *Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World*.