

Maputo Review Conference on a Mine-Free World

23–27 June 2014

Statement on Clearance

by Dr. Guy Rhodes, Director of Operations,
Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining

Maputo, 24 June 2014

Thank you Mr (?) Chair,

Section 3 of the Maputo Action Plan on Mine Clearance states that 'Each State Party with on-going mine clearance obligations will undertake all reasonable efforts to quantify and qualify its remaining implementation challenge ... and report this information ... by April 2015.

Furthermore, Paragraph 9 states that each State Party should ensure that relevant Land Release Standards - in line with International Mine Action Standards - are in place and applied.

Notwithstanding the complexity of the nature of contamination in many post conflict settings, the lack of greater clarity on the extent of the landmine problem is often a consequence of poor survey approaches and weak information management practices.

Understanding this, the GICHD has taken considerable steps to strengthen the training and support services to the mine action sector in this area. One key initiative has been a refocus on the promotion of better standards in conducting Non-Technical Survey and offering improved tools to store, analyse and present contamination data with greater precision. Increasingly, the GICHD offers integrated operations and information management training and support. Such a joint approach helps address one of the principal problems in many mine action programmes - that being the disconnect between field operations and national database facilities. Failures here introduce shortfalls in the quality and consistency of data

... which can undermine confidence in the reporting that is supposed to support planning and transparency under this Convention.

The culmination of 24 months of work saw the approval of the new Land Release IMAS and a re-organisation of the IMAS series last year. These amended standards promote operational efficiency and standardisation of terminology for reporting - reinforcing stringent, evidenced-based approaches to survey work - where data is disaggregated by activity, land classification and type of contamination.

Ensuring that these International Standards are reflected within National Standards, and promoting their application, is an important objective of the GICHD outreach activities.

Last month the GICHD conducted a train-the-trainer course in Hammelburg, Germany, raising the bar in standards of Non-Technical Survey activities - including the reinforcement of good practices in field mapping and information management. These are critical elements within many mine action programmes that must be addressed if the Maputo Action Plan on Clearance is to be realized. The course in Germany was well attended by senior operational staff from the UN, the ICRC and NGOs. It is to be followed in July by further training of field staff closer to the ground.

Such efforts however must be combined with a commitment from national authorities and implementation partners if an appreciable improvement in the ability of affected States to better quantify and qualify the task at hand - is to occur.

In parallel to this, the GICHD now offers enhanced Information Management tools and software to support the effort to obtain greater clarification on the extent of contamination and to monitor progress of clearance operations.

An example is the recent launch of a new version of the Information Management System for Mine Action - IMSMA NG6 - which occurred following an intensive period of development. IMSMA was first released in Kosovo in 1999, and now plays a central role in mine action in more than 40 countries. For the last 15 years, IMSMA tools have provided mine action programmes with decision-support for the coordination and management of operations.

This new version is the first since the release of IMSMA NG5 in 2005. It responds to a wide range of feedback from the mine action community and incorporates significant technical upgrades to its core system - as well as important adaptations to ensure consistency with the latest Land Release IMAS.

Highlights of IMSMA NG6 include:

- Updated terminology
- Vastly extended functionality for Victim Assistance,
- Online interactive manuals (IMSMA Wiki),
- A simplified reporting approach, and
- A web-based indicator monitoring tool – known as the Mine Action INTelligence Tool, or MINT.

Although there are significant technical differences between IMSMA NG5 and NG6, the user interface will remain familiar. The launch of NG6 also marks the beginning of a new cycle of less frequent but more robust software updates. More information on NG6 is available at the GICHD stall, or on our website.

Lastly, I would also like to take this opportunity to mention that the GICHD aims to provide additional options for Information Management support to programmes which will be more systems-centric. One of the primary goals is to help ensure that Information Management works for all Mine Action partners - where a fully-fledged IMSMA NG system is just one of a number of possible IM solutions – but there are other solutions that allow additional components and tools to work together. Solutions that the GICHD will also readily support.

To accomplish this, the GICHD is developing the means by which any number of providers can introduce or develop tools:

- That are user-driven,
- That communicate information with one another according to Mine Action Information Management Standards, and
- Which together form effective Information Management Systems.

Thank you.