

## **International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action**

*Panel discussion meeting*

*Dag Hammarskjold Library Auditorium*

*4 April 2006, 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.*

- It gives me great pleasure to address you today on this first International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action.
- I feel particularly privileged to be part of this panel which represents all facets of mine action. I would like to thank Her Excellency Ms. Ana Paula dos Santos, First Lady of Angola, and my colleagues from the Landmine Survivors Network who remind us of why mine action remains such an important issue. I also want to thank Danny Glover for helping us raise awareness about this day and Richard Kidd for demonstrating the continued commitment of donors who have so generously supported this cause. Mine action includes addressing the effects of anti-personnel mines, anti-tank mines and all other explosive remnants of war. Mine Action includes the development and sustaining of partnerships between all mine action stakeholders. Mine Action affects us all and, working together we can relegate mines and their impact to the annals of history. They must not be allowed to cloud our future.
- In the realm of mine action, the UN has been successful at ‘speaking with one voice’, a hallmark of UN reform. We have a policy that clearly divides the roles and responsibilities of the 14 UN Agencies and Department involved in mine action, and we are in the process of finalizing a five year strategy [from 2006 – 2010], which will help us improve UN interventions in this critical area. In addition, the international mine action community has developed a series of tools that have enabled us to deliver services better and more consistently. Mine action is a problem with a solution - and this is reflected in our new UN strategy.

- The United Nations provides mine action assistance to more than 35 countries. It is important to note we believe that the primary responsibility for mine action lies with affected countries. We encourage governments to develop national plans that are both compliant with legal obligations, and realistic in terms of the expected contributions for international donors. Countries like Angola epitomize this principle. We also encourage States Parties to devote national resources to mine action and to reflect these contributions in their national mine action plans. As an example, the United Nations is supporting the Partnership for Completion Initiative. The initiative seeks to accelerate clearance activities, particularly in countries that can demonstrate that their landmine problem can be solved in three to five years, for less than 10 million dollars. [We believe that accelerating clearance in a few countries will allow us to demonstrate tangible success and prove that the solution to the landmine problem is within our reach. In order to participate in this initiative, countries need to demonstrate that they are providing national resources towards this problem. Countries also need to demonstrate their willingness to develop the national capacity to address the residual landmine problem, once international assistance phases out.] Zambia is one of the completion countries. It has so far addressed the landmine and explosive remnants of war using mostly national resources. The UN is advocating for increased donor support for Zambia. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, is already a success story. Once a UN-supported national mine action programme, Azerbaijan now conducts its operations with minimal technical support from our mine action experts.
- At the UN, we address the challenges of mine action through the broader lens of conflict prevention and recovery.
- As part of conflict prevention, within our preventive work, we work to prevent or mitigate the impact of landmines and explosive remnants of war on communities and to implement the Millennium Development Goals. We advocate for the universalization of and compliance with relevant legal instruments, including the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (and its protocols on landmines and explosive remnants of war). We raise

awareness about the humanitarian and development impact of cluster munitions and urge the international community to address them. In 2005 as in previous years, we provided assistance to States Parties at the country-level to prepare their transparency reports as per Article 7 of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. I am pleased to report that close to 100% of the States Parties that we assist provided their reports this year.

- The UN also builds the capacities of affected countries to address the scourge of landmines and explosive remnants of war. This includes assisting national authorities to mainstream mine action as part of their broader national development plans or poverty reduction strategies, working with multilateral institutions to ensure that appropriate, user-friendly guidance exists, and cooperating with donor countries to ensure that mine action is considered within development plans and policies. [As a result of our advocacy work, the World Bank now provides loans for mine action. The UN, through UNDP, is also working with the OECD-DAC to provide guidelines to donor countries on how to integrate mine action in their overseas development assistance.] Countries like Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina and Cambodia have included their mine action funding requirements as part of their Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. We believe that mine action is not a “cost” for development, but rather a sound investment for development planners. This is confirmed in studies in Afghanistan and Cambodia, as well as in other countries. The UN’s assistance also includes the integration of gender considerations into mine action programming. There now exist a comprehensive set of United Nations Guidelines for incorporating gender concerns into Mine Action Programmes. They provide practical examples on how to ensure gender-sensitized mine action programming in the area of clearance, mine risk education, victim assistance and advocacy. We will ensure that all UN staff are aware of these guidelines—through training and wide dissemination—and will help pilot their integration into national plans. It is clear, however, that we still have a long way to go to ensure a systematic integration of gender considerations into all aspects of planning and programming. There remains a lack of understanding of the ways in which women and girls are affected by mines – in tilling the land, fetching water and walking to health and social services. Gender is too often treated as a

stand-alone subject instead of as an integrated component of national mine action programmes. This needs to change.

- This first International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action is an important event. It allows us to raise the international community's attention to the achievements of mine action. We have good news to tell; together, we can solve this problem, in years rather than decades, as Danny Glover has said. But in order to do so, in order to end the carnage we saw in the film that opened this meeting, three things need to happen: mine affected countries and communities need to continue to demonstrate ownership; donors need to stay the course; and we all need to work together.

This day was declared to remind us all that the decision to end the lethal legacy of mines and explosive remnants of war is in our hands. History will judge us on the choices we make.