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## Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

### Summary record of the 18th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 28 October 2011, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Vivas (Vice-Chair) . . . . . (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)  
*later:* Ms. Miculescu (Chair). . . . . (Romania)

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*In the absence of Ms. Miculescu (Romania), Ms. Vivas (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

**Agenda item 49: Assistance in mine action (A/66/292 and A/C.4/66/L.6)**

1. **Mr. Titov** (Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions, Department of Peacekeeping Operations), speaking on behalf of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group for Mine Action and introducing the report of the Secretary-General on assistance in mine action (A/66/292), which covered the period from August 2009 to July 2011, said that the report stressed the impact of mine action as it was integrated by the United Nations Mine Action Team into the five major areas of United Nations work outlined in paragraph 2, pursuant to the four strategic objectives identified in the United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy for 2006-2010.

2. With regard to strategic objective 1, reduction of death and injury, there had been a noticeable reduction in deaths and injury due to mines and explosive remnants of war, owing to the collective clearance and mine risk education efforts of national authorities, the United Nations and partners. The exception was the Sudan, where the number of mine victims had increased by 35 per cent in 2010; and new threats from mines in areas of recent conflict like Libya and Côte d'Ivoire would require vigilance and quick reaction.

3. In connection with strategic objective 2, risk mitigation to community livelihoods and expanded freedom of movement, significant strides had been made in restoring contaminated land for normal use, as in Cambodia, although elsewhere, lack of funds or lack of security had hindered progress. However, in Afghanistan, for example, community-based demining had effectively operated in high-risk areas, while enhancing stability.

4. As for strategic objective 3, integration of mine action into national plans and budgets, the United Nations had worked with national counterparts to promote the integration of mine action into their development and reconstruction plans and budgets, an essential step to bolster national ownership and sustainability, and to underscore that the presence of mines and explosive remnants correlated with barriers to development such as poverty and food insecurity.

5. Under strategic objective 4, development of relevant national institutions, the United Nations had worked with national mine action authorities in various countries, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo or Sri Lanka, to build local capacity and ensure national ownership of mine action strategies and priorities. The United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) had also encouraged cooperation among mine-affected States through its Mine Action Exchange Programme, which promoted South-South dialogue and facilitated information-sharing.

6. There had been a number of key developments with regard to related international instruments. The entry into force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the negotiations on a protocol on cluster munitions to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons) had raised international awareness of the dangers and unacceptable effects of cluster munitions. The leadership and greater involvement of mine-affected States themselves in the meetings of States parties to the various relevant international instruments was a promising trend. All Member States were of course encouraged to become parties to those treaties.

7. As part of the Organization's effort to work more cohesively both within and outside the United Nations system, the Mine Action Area of Responsibility, comprising representatives of the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and other partners, was now operating within the Global Protection Cluster led by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Mine action was being further integrated into peacekeeping, humanitarian and development mandates and into broader structures like the Committee on Mine Action. Thematic reports in a range of fields now referred to mine action with greater frequency.

8. The revised Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes, revised in 2010, identified measures to balance the participation of men and women in all aspects of mine action. A new International Mine Action Standard had been approved in 2010 on mine risk education. Efforts had also been made to ensure coherence among mine action, ammunition management and work on small arms control in the United Nations

system, with technical guidance provided on occasion by the United Nations Mine Action Team.

9. The Joint Inspection Unit had, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/84, performed an initial review of mine action at Headquarters and in several countries and sectors. He looked forward to its recommendations on how the United Nations could better serve the needs of mine-affected States.

10. The draft resolution under consideration in the Committee acknowledged the primary responsibility of States to address mine action but also demonstrated the commitment of the international community to United Nations assistance in mine action. The recent kidnapping in Somalia of personnel working to dismantle mines was reprehensible, for they were performing the most heroic kind of humanitarian work, and should never be a target anywhere in the world.

11. **Mr. Kos** (Observer for the European Union), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, Iceland, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that while progress had been made in combating especially anti-personnel mine casualties in the past two years, sizable challenges remained. The international community must thus work vigorously to expand acceptance of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention). The European Union was committed to implementing the Cartagena Action Plan 2010-2014 as an agreed basis for the fight against anti-personnel mines; a forthcoming decision of the European Council would focus on victim assistance, mine clearance and universalization, with technical projects to be implemented by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining.

12. The European Union was resolved to cooperate with States that needed assistance in meeting the commitments of the Convention. It encouraged States to make mine action a national priority and to integrate it into their broader development and cooperation policies, so as to further the objective of zero victims and to ensure national ownership. Concerned also with ensuring a high level of support for victims worldwide, the European Union and its member States had

provided more than €2 billion over the past 10 years, roughly half of the total contributions to mine action.

13. Introducing the draft resolution on assistance in mine action (A/C.4/66/L.6) on behalf of the sponsors, the members of the European Union welcomed the inclusion of the Convention on Cluster Munitions as an important legal framework to address the humanitarian challenges; and drew particular attention to the provisions of the eighth preambular paragraph and paragraph 11.

14. **Mr. Vidal** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the associated States Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), said that achievements under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention had demonstrated the positive effects of concerted action by the international community to address grave humanitarian and development challenges. The adoption of the Cartagena Action Plan 2010-2014 was a welcome step towards fuller application of the Convention. MERCOSUR was committed to the total eradication of anti-personnel mines because of their perverse nature, which distinguished them from most other weapons. It also supported the international community's efforts to regulate cluster munitions.

15. The clearance and destruction of anti-personnel mines pursuant to the Convention would restore economic activity in the affected communities, a goal also promoted regionally by the Organization of American States (OAS) in its 1991 anti-personnel mine action programme, which provided as well for humanitarian assistance to victims and preventive mine risk education of the civilian population. The commendable work done under the United Nations Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy for 2006-2010 went beyond mine clearance to broader goals, such as promoting development and helping to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

16. Owing to the complexity of destroying anti-personnel mines, article 5 of the Convention made provision for States parties to request an extension of the deadline for meeting that obligation; and technical and financial assistance to such States by the donor community, civil society and national, regional and international organizations was crucial.

17. One of the biggest challenges facing the international community was meeting the needs of the

countless landmine victims in terms of health, education, rehabilitation, reintegration and legal protection. The growing number of ratifications of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol would help in that regard. The tragedy of the individual victims hindered the well-being, development and enjoyment of rights of their entire communities, and must be addressed in the larger context of public services and the promotion of development.

18. **Mr. Mohamed** (Sudan) said that, as one of the countries most affected by landmines, the Sudan was deeply committed to their removal and destruction, to raising awareness of the problem and to assisting its victims. The country's extensive demining programme had already scored considerable success and demining and mine-destruction efforts were continuing, through cooperation between the United Nations Mine Action Service, UNDP and national non-governmental organizations such as the Sudanese Red Crescent Society.

19. Noting the observation by the Secretary-General in his report (A/66/292) that non-State actors were still planting mines in some countries, he pointed out that mines had been left by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in the states of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile without indicating their locality on any maps. For its part, the Government of the Sudan had undertaken to provide maps of all mines in the area of Abyei and it hoped that the Government of South Sudan would also provide maps showing the distribution of mines that it had laid.

20. The Sudan was also working to raise awareness of the problem, through direct outreach to the public, by training teachers in the affected States and by supporting the voluntary return of populations to areas which had been cleared of all mines. Some 2 million people, including many women, had benefited from that awareness-raising programme, and normal life and agricultural and other productive activities were being resumed in the cleared areas.

21. In April 2008 the Sudan had been one of the six countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Government had taken effective steps to assist victims of mines. In particular, the Labour Code had been amended to increase to 5 per cent the number of positions allocated to disabled persons in both the government and the

private sectors. In conclusion, he stressed the importance of continued international support for his country in the areas of capacity-building and technology transfer, to ensure the rehabilitation of victims and the clearance and destruction of mines.

22. **Mr. Papa Omar Ndiaye** (Senegal), underscoring the heavy human and economic cost of mines, said that Africa was the continent with the greatest number of affected States. Sustained political, financial and material efforts must be made, in accordance with article 6 of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, on the national, regional and international levels to help affected countries proceed with mine clearance and effectively address victims' needs.

23. The fact that 156 Member States had acceded to the Convention had enabled significant headway to be made in destroying mines, yet the viability of the treaty depended on the political will of the States parties to comply without delay with the required confidence-building, transparency and control measures. Senegal welcomed the Cartagena Action Plan 2010-2014, which reinforced the Convention. Like all States parties, Senegal had a 10-year deadline for removing and destroying all mines on its territory, but since it had not yet completed the decontamination of mine areas, its deadline had been extended to 2016. To that end, the Government had adopted a national mine action strategy for 2007-2015 and mine action guidelines.

24. **Mr. Al Bayati** (Iraq) said that his Government had adopted a clear, balanced, non-militaristic policy affirming its determination to be a stabilizing factor in the Middle East. It would respect all international agreements and conventions in respect of disarmament and non-proliferation, and was focused on reconstructing the country's infrastructure, so badly damaged after years of conflict and the irresponsible policies of the former regime. Recent wars had left in their wake more than 1.3 million square metres of mine-contaminated land, which made impossible any socio-economic development in those areas and prevented the displaced from returning to their homes. Mine removal and victim assistance were therefore a top priority for the Government.

25. Iraq had complied with its reporting obligations under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. All mine-producing facilities had been destroyed; most provinces had been scanned in preparation for mine clearance, with cooperation from NGOs, between 2004

and 2006, and the rest of the country would be scanned as the security situation permitted, to get an overall idea of the extent of the problem. Despite the challenges, over 44,000 square metres had already been demined to date. The Ministry of Environment was drafting national plans for mine removal and assistance to victims, and would share mine clearance responsibilities with the Ministry of Defence in order to fully comply with the Convention.

26. The Government's victim-assistance programmes, however, were hampered by technical and financial resources that were inadequate to the magnitude of the problem, and by a lack of accurate data on the number of victims. The help of the international community would therefore be crucial.

27. **Mr. Pintado** (Mexico) said that although his country did not stockpile, produce or use mines, it was nevertheless aware of the humanitarian and socio-economic consequences of their use, and knew that States had the primary responsibility to deal with the problem of landmines and their effects.

28. The major international legal instruments governing mine action, such as the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Cartagena Action Plan 2010-2014 had attracted more signatories and were gaining universal reach; while the four strategic objectives of the Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy were being implemented, and mine action had been integrated into peacekeeping and other United Nations humanitarian and development programmes.

29. Mexico applauded the tireless work of Governments, United Nations bodies and programmes and NGOs that had made progress possible. Yet urgent challenges remained before complete destruction of mines and munitions could be achieved. Recent information from NGOs on the use of cluster munitions in 2011 was cause for concern. Mexico, together with Norway and Austria, had opposed the clear intention of countries producing and possessing cluster munitions to establish standards, under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, that differed from those in the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Member States must stand together to uphold the spirit and principles of disarmament and international humanitarian law.

30. Mexico had a great deal of experience in comprehensive rehabilitation of disabled persons and was working on developing broader rehabilitation services. Its experience in that area could prove useful

as a complement to mine action programmes. There should also be greater cooperation between receiving and donor countries in addressing the needs of communities affected by the social, economic, cultural and security impact of mines. States that had not yet done so should ratify the international instruments on mine action.

31. **Mr. Al Awadi** (United Arab Emirates) said that his country was deeply concerned that, notwithstanding efforts by the United Nations to counter their proliferation, landmines continued to be laid in many parts of the world, threatening the health and lives of peacekeepers, humanitarian workers and civilians in general, plaguing the environment and impeding economic and social development. The scourge of landmines and unexploded ordnance demanded a consolidated response from the international community and genuine support for mine-action activities. Accordingly, States and other parties responsible for laying mines must display the necessary political will in identifying contaminated zones, pinpointing the location of mines and thereby reducing risks.

32. For its part, the United Arab Emirates was a major contributor to United Nations mine action programmes and was also supporting the efforts to clear mines and cluster munitions from the south of Lebanon, and the reconstruction work in that country in the aftermath of the war waged against it by Israel. In that context, it called upon the international community to ensure that Israel provided landmine maps detailing the location of its landmines and unexploded ordnance in South Lebanon, thereby enabling the Lebanese Government to clear those areas and develop them as part of its national development strategy.

33. His country had also contributed some \$28 million over the previous four years to reconstruction and rehabilitation work in Afghanistan, including measures to build its capacity in the area of mine action, through awareness-raising on the dangers of mines and training programmes for deminers. In conclusion, he reaffirmed his delegation's support for the role played by the United Nations and other international and regional organizations in tackling the problem of landmines and unexploded ordnance and called for strengthened international support for those efforts and for the rehabilitation of victims.

34. **Ms. King** (Australia) said that her Government's \$100 million mine action strategy for the Australian aid

programme for 2010-2014 had brought its total support of mine action to \$275 million since 1997. As a long-term development partner of mine-affected countries in South-East Asia, Australia had supported mine removal from nearly 12 million metres of land in Laos and Cambodia, and had facilitated the return of almost 20,000 internally displaced persons to their homes in Sri Lanka. Her Government had also committed \$20 million over four years for comprehensive mine action in Afghanistan.

35. Experience had revealed ways to maximize the impact of mine assistance. A long-term, integrated and comprehensive approach to mine action, risk education and victim assistance removed impediments to development caused by unexploded ordnance, and was directly related to progress on the Millennium Development Goals. Furthermore, national ownership of mine action programmes enhanced the effectiveness and sustainability of the assistance, and their inclusion in national development programmes broadened the impact on development. From a donor's perspective, affected States were encouraged to choose the most appropriate mine clearance method from among the range of reliable, practical methods to rapidly release areas suspected of contamination. In addition, multi-year funding had been shown to enhance the predictability and flexibility of support and reduce administrative costs; and, lastly, a mine action approach that accounted for age and gender, and the views of persons with disabilities and those affected by mines, improved the outcome for everyone.

36. It was a challenge to match mine action needs with available resources. Australia, to ensure maximum effectiveness of its assistance, required mine-affected countries to prioritize mine action within their national development plans at every level. She encouraged the Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy to demonstrate, through results-based reporting, how mine action was linked to the broader development goals of communities. Affected countries should continue to develop new partnerships and to seek support from non-traditional sources that included new donors, the private sector and international development banks.

37. It was most effective to coordinate assistance at the national level and therefore Australia supported nationally owned and coordinated mine action programmes. More strategic partnerships in the donor community at the international level were also possible, and should be explored. Australia would continue to

support the activities of the United Nations Mine Action Service and looked forward to the outcome of the Joint Inspection Unit evaluation. Australia itself was in the process of reviewing its 2010-2014 mine action strategy to ensure its effectiveness.

38. Her Government deplored the unfortunate recent use of destructive munitions in Libya, Somalia and Sudan in 2011, and commended those who had worked to remove landmines and unexploded remnants of war in over 70 countries, often at great personal risk.

39. **Mr. Kimura** (Japan) said that his Government was committed to promoting universal accession to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, especially in the Asia-Pacific region.

40. Since 1998, Japan had contributed almost \$450 million in mine assistance to 42 countries. It was important to address mine action assistance comprehensively, and to promote national ownership. Japan, therefore, attached great importance to capacity-building in affected countries. It had also promoted various South-South cooperation schemes such as the one between Cambodia and Colombia, and believed such exchanges should be encouraged. A firm supporter of Inter-Agency Mine Action Strategy, Japan had become in 2010 the top donor to its Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action.

41. End results were far more positive when bilateral and multilateral assistance were combined. Aid coordination among donors was also important. Japan, for instance, had established official development assistance task forces to facilitate cooperation between Japanese embassy officials and aid agencies in 80 countries, in constant consultation with the recipient countries and other donors.

42. The forthcoming eleventh Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention could be expected to further its implementation and accelerate the adoption of concrete measures that would make the impact of mine assistance more tangible on the ground.

43. **Mr. Tsymbaliuk** (Ukraine), hailing the work of the United Nations Mine Action Service in policymaking, coordination and advocacy, said that national mine action strategies must ensure effective short-, medium- and long-term priorities, and mine action assistance must encourage national ownership to

ensure sustainability. The number of countries needing assistance was steadily on the rise, and timely aid from donors was vital to the success of mine action programmes.

44. The goal of the international community should be the prohibition of the production, use, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines, yet it should be pursued gradually through broader adherence to the Optional Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices, to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

45. Though more than 50 years had passed since the end of the Second World War, unexploded ordnance was still being cleared and neutralized in his country. In recent years Ukraine had destroyed 400,000 devices under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and it was committed to continuing the process, with international assistance, until all its stockpiles had been destroyed. Because of its extensive experience in mine clearance technology and a logistics base that allowed it to train skilled specialists quickly, Ukraine's mine clearance engineers were active around the world, operating according to United Nations standards and procedures. It stood ready to provide technical support to United Nations missions as well.

46. The authorities of mine-affected countries were responsible for addressing the problem of unexploded ordnance, but where national resources fell short, the suffering and hindrances caused had to be addressed within a humanitarian and development framework by the United Nations.

47. **Mr. Benashur** (Libya) said that, as a country which had suffered severely from the effects of mines and unexploded ordnance left behind after the Second World War, Libya was very interested in international assistance in the field of demining. In that context, it acknowledged the assistance rendered to the former Government in its demining efforts by a number of European countries.

48. Libya currently faced a new challenge posed by the hundreds of thousands of mines laid by the Qadhafi regime, in blatant contempt of international humanitarian law, in its recent war against the Libyan people. Those mines and other unexploded ordnance, which had been deployed across vast swathes of Libyan territory, including agricultural land and urban residential areas, were among the most sophisticated and harmful of their kind and posed an even more serious problem, in

terms of both numbers and destructive power, than the explosive remnants of the Second World War, rendering demining one of the priorities of the new Government and necessitating assistance from the United Nations and friendly neighbouring countries.

49. Accordingly, his delegation looked forward to effective cooperation with the United Nations in securing the necessary technical assistance to build national capacity in the field of demining. It also called for redoubled international efforts in that area, including specialized demining programmes for countries emerging from armed conflicts, assistance with the physical rehabilitation and social reintegration of disabled victims and campaigns to raise awareness of mines among the general population.

50. Lastly, he reaffirmed Libya's commitment to cooperation in demining efforts at both bilateral and international levels within the framework of the United Nations and other organizations in order to achieve a world free of mines and other internationally prohibited lethal weapons.

51. **Ms. García López** (Honduras) said that it was crucial to join forces to eliminate the cruel use of anti-personnel mines completely, inculcate a culture of accident prevention and address the needs of victims. In 1999, regional Governments had set up the Assistance Programme for Demining in Central America and the Assistance Mission for Mine Clearance in Central America and had succeeded in making the entire region a mine-free zone by 2010. Honduras itself had been mine-free since 2003, though many of its citizens still lived with the consequences of the devastating devices.

52. It was important to reintegrate mine survivors fully into society, yet rehabilitation was costly. Her Government worked closely with non-governmental organizations active in the field to meet the needs of victims. While progress had been made globally, it was disheartening to note that such devices still posed a danger in countries around the world, and even that new mines were being planted.

53. **Mr. Ruiz** (Colombia) said that at least 68 countries still lived with the threat of 110 million anti-personnel mines in their territory, including Colombia, where despite all efforts, mines had claimed almost 10,000 victims since 1990. His Government categorically condemned the use of anti-personnel mines and in fulfilment of article 5 of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, all its army stockpiles had been

destroyed and all areas where mines had been laid by the military had been cleared. In all, it had been able to clear mines from 425,000 square metres in 13 municipalities. However, irresponsible non-State actors in the country continued to use them, and they should be stopped by international pressure.

54. The Government's mine action focused on the social, economic and environmental impact of anti-personnel mines and other unexploded munitions; on seeking out victims, 61 per cent of whom had thus far been given humanitarian assistance; and on completing its formulation of strategic national standards for humanitarian demining. A national mine risk awareness campaign to educate civilians was also under way. All these measures had made it possible to make progress in assisting affected communities recovering productive land, enabling displaced populations of vulnerable peasants to return, reconstructing the country's network of public services, and rehabilitating victims so that they could once again be active in society.

55. His country had hosted the Second Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in 2009, at which the international community had adopted the Cartagena Action Plan 2010-2014, establishing new measures for destroying stockpiles, clearing mines and assisting victims. All countries must continue to implement the Convention. International efforts were a central element in mine action and continuing technical and financial assistance from donor countries was crucial to enable affected countries to overcome the damage caused to victims and their communities.

56. **Mr. Aquino** (Peru), reviewing his Government's advances in demining in the past year, said that it had strengthened its National Training Centre for Humanitarian Mine Clearance, so that it had been able to train more clearance squads, two of which included the first two women graduates. Peru had updated its national mine clearance standards, upgraded its mine-clearing equipment, and introduced a manual clearance strategy involving the use of machines and dogs that had increased effectiveness by 200 per cent while maintaining security. In the course of the year Peru had destroyed over 4,000 landmines, clearing about 30,000 square metres of land, and had destroyed almost 4,000 anti-personnel devices in mined buildings and over 500 more along the border with Ecuador.

57. With international assistance, information on mine victims was being updated by the National Anti-Personnel Mine Action Centre. Two medical campaigns had been conducted to treat victims physically and psychologically, along with many projects for the social and economic reintegration of victims and survivors.

58. Peru and Ecuador were working closely on demining training, and exchange of best practices, information and expertise, to help each of them fulfil its obligations under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Peru had hosted a mine clearance course and a mine action management workshop, while Ecuador would soon host a workshop on mine clearance in the jungle. Sharing best practices, Ecuador had contributed logistical facilities along the border for supplying Peruvian deminers, and had opened an aerial medical evacuation route there with support from OAS. A mine-detector exchange programme would also soon be in effect along their border, and they would continue to provide each other with updates on danger zones, which had made for more effective mine action planning and allocation of resources. All those initiatives were part of a larger relationship of mutual trust and cooperation between Peru and Ecuador, but also an indication that funds which donors had given for the noble cause of demining were being put to good use.

59. **Ms. Phommachanh** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that her Government strongly supported the international efforts to address the humanitarian concerns raised by landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war. Such efforts contributed to global peace and stability and to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

60. As the most bombed nation, per capita, in the world, the Lao People's Democratic Republic accounted for nearly one half of all confirmed cluster munition casualties worldwide, and over one half of its land had been contaminated by unexploded ordnance, dramatically stunting the country's development for more than 45 years. Over the past two decades it had of necessity acquired a great deal of experience in bomb clearance, risk education and victim assistance and had seen how effective multilateral cooperation was in reducing casualties and making communities safe.

61. The Convention on Cluster Munitions sent a clear message that the use of such indiscriminate weapons was not tolerated. Her Government had hosted the first



Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, which had produced the Vientiane Declaration and the Vientiane Action Plan 2010-2015 and their important guidelines. States parties must now find the resources necessary to meet their obligations under the Convention, and universal accession to it and to its norms must be promoted.

62. Her country had integrated unexploded ordnance clearance into its national development plan for 2011-2015. It had set a target for eradicating unexploded ordnance from its agricultural land by 2020, had established a trust fund for the implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions with help from UNDP, and was revising its 10-year plan for the implementation of the Convention with targets, indicators and needed funds. The UNDP country programme for the Lao People's Democratic Republic for 2012-2015 had, in fact, included unexploded ordnance among its four priorities.

63. Her Government supported United Nations efforts to integrate mine action into peacekeeping operations, development programmes and humanitarian action, and welcomed the revision of Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes to ensure equal participation and decision-making and also proportionate impact. There were already a number of female Lao clearance personnel and some entirely female clearance teams. The Guidelines were an important development for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

64. **Mr. Gumende** (Mozambique) said that it was necessary to consider how the developing countries could be helped to implement the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Reliable, predictable international and regional funding and provision of information and technical assistance were crucial to establishing national mine action capacities.

65. Since it had ratified the Convention in 1999, Mozambique had made mine action an integral part of its national development strategy for poverty reduction, and had mainstreamed it into every economic and social sector and into all district-level planning. Sixty of its 114 districts were free of mines and unexploded ordnance, and it expected to clear 90 districts by the end of 2011. The new national mine action plan it had developed after receiving a five-year extension of its deadline under the Convention for completing the destruction of all mines had made it a priority to address the remaining border districts, which otherwise

had a high potential for the development of the country. The district-by-district clearance strategy and the quantifying of threats and costs were already producing positive results, and the Government was at the same time working to establish a mechanism to prevent mine-related accidents through the training of clearance experts and the publicizing of mine-infested areas.

66. Mozambique still had more than 10 million square metres of mine-contaminated land, an enormous challenge. It was, however, committed to its national mine action plan and counted on international partners to continue to provide technical and financial support. The goal was to be mine-free by the end of 2013, one year ahead of the deadline.

67. **Mr. He Yi** (China) said that his Government attached great importance to the humanitarian concerns raised by landmines and supported the relevant international instruments. It faithfully fulfilled its obligations under Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and was a member of the group of governmental experts established under the Protocol. China also appreciated the humanitarian spirit of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and endorsed its objectives, attending its meetings of States Parties as an observer. It also maintained contacts with many non-governmental organizations in the field of international mine action.

68. It was important to give more assistance to the many countries where landmines posed a serious threat and hindered economic development and social rehabilitation. Cooperation on international mine action should be based on three principles: providing demining assistance that was appropriate to the specific conditions and requirements of the recipients; enhancing capacity-building in mine-affected countries so that they could depend less on external assistance; and exploring new and better approaches to international cooperation on mine action to ensure its effectiveness.

69. As a former mine-affected country, China fully understood the problems and had since 1998 been operating a long-term, systematic international demining programme that had provided assistance to nearly 40 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America in the form of financing, equipment and training. In 2011, his Government had held training courses for personnel from Sri Lanka, the Sudan and South Sudan. It had also provided mine and cluster-munitions victim assistance

to countries like Peru, Ethiopia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Experience had shown that Chinese demining techniques were safe and reliable and its demining equipment cost-effective and efficient. China would continue to cooperate closely with all parties and make further contributions to resolving the humanitarian concerns caused by landmines.

70. **Mr. Rahmonov** (Republic of Tajikistan) said that the implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention had reduced the impact of landmines, but that they continued to be a threat to thousands worldwide. The issue was of grave concern to Tajikistan, which had made demining a vital part of its development plans. Hundreds of its civilians had been injured by landmines, and land use and income were being lost owing to mine contamination.

71. His Government was committed to the full implementation of the Convention, and had destroyed all stockpiled anti-personnel mines in its territory by the required deadline. However, it had requested a 10-year extension under article 5 of the Convention to clear its territory of mines. The Tajikistan Mine Action Centre worked with donor countries and international organizations to develop the nation's mine action capacity in such areas as land surveying and clearance, disposal operations, technical equipment, awareness-raising and assistance to victims; and it encouraged others to furnish Tajikistan with the help it needed.

72. Tajikistan firmly supported a mine-free zone in Central Asia. Greater global solidarity and support for mine awareness and mine action were needed to build a safer world for all.

73. **Ms. Pamaranon** (Thailand) said that about 25,000 innocent victims were killed or maimed yearly by landmines; even the suspicion of contamination could deny people access to community resources crucial for livelihoods and development, and landmine survivors often lacked adequate medical, psychological and social services. Over the years, however, progress had been made, especially thanks to the Cartagena Action Plan 2010-2014, the establishment of the Standing Committee on Resources, Cooperation and Assistance under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, and the completion of the Inter-Agency Mine Strategy for 2006-2010. Thailand looked forward to hosting the eleventh Meeting of States Parties to the Convention.

74. Thailand made every effort to move forward in mine clearance, victim assistance and cooperation with mine-affected partners. The Thailand Mine Action Centre had submitted its mine action strategy for 2010-2014 to the Government and UNDP had assisted the Centre with a capacity-building project. The Government was reviewing its land-release methods, revising its national mine action standards and the mine action master plan for 2011-2018, and conducting anti-personnel landmine detection surveys, all with help from international partners.

75. As a mine-affected country, Thailand was fully aware of the humanitarian implications of unexploded ordnance. Its minefield identification procedures had resulted in a significant reduction in areas suspected of contamination and it had made some progress in mine clearance. Its humanitarian mine action units conducted demining activities and mine-risk awareness campaigns, as well as victim assistance operations along the border with Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

76. Victim assistance and mine risk education were as much at the heart of mine action as was mine clearance. Working in conjunction with NGOs, Thailand sought to reintegrate victims into society with dignity by raising public awareness of their problems and developing appropriate victim assistance programmes. It was currently drafting a national victim assistance master plan. It had also trained more than 90,000 local people in affected provinces and educated them about the dangers of mines.

77. International cooperation based on shared responsibility was crucial to the success of the Convention. Most mine-affected countries were among the least developed, and thus faced serious obstacles to successful mine action, making donor support vital. Thailand was ready to work with all parties and appreciated all technical and financial assistance.

78. **Mr. Škrabalo** (Croatia) said that his country had been a mine-affected country ever since its independence 20 years earlier, but had progressed to the point that it had developed significant domestic capacity to address the humanitarian, social and economic impact of mines. Mine action, owing to its complexity, had to become part of a State's longer-term development efforts. National ownership was vital in resolving the problem, but reliable, timely funding from donor States was also crucial. Both donor and

recipient countries must prioritize mine action in their development strategies.

79. States needed to strengthen their health and social systems to provide victim assistance and mine-risk education, and they needed to provide schooling and job opportunities for victims. It was particularly important to consider the human rights perspective, in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

80. Croatia was aware of the need to share its knowledge and experience as a mine-affected State with others, and was actively cooperating in every aspect of mine action, particularly in south-eastern Europe. The Croatian Mine Action Centre trained staff from the region and beyond, and Croatian-made demining machines were world-renowned for their efficacy and high quality. Domestically, the Government had established a national victim assistance agency, which, inter alia, was setting up a national database of victims. It would be interested in learning the experiences of other countries with legal protection of such personal data.

81. The eleventh Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, to be held in Cambodia, would be a chance to assess progress and outline a plan of action towards full implementation of the Convention. Landmines were a security issue, a development issue and a humanitarian issue that must be important to all States, who must work together to create a mine-free world.

82. **Ms. Kazragienė** (Lithuania) said that Lithuania was a party to a number of international humanitarian law instruments relevant to mine action, most recently the Convention on Cluster Munitions. It had submitted a voluntary transparency report under article 7, and hoped that the Convention would become universal. An additional protocol on cluster munitions to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons would also strengthen international humanitarian law. In the meantime, it was important to promote the implementation of its Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War (Protocol V).

83. Each State party was responsible for the implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, yet assistance from other stakeholders was crucial. Donors needed to take into account the particular situation of each recipient country, and to encourage national ownership by helping to build

national capacities. Lithuania had learned from experience that both donor and recipient countries should honour their commitments to cooperate. Her country commended all those assisting other countries in the destruction of mines, especially by helping them develop environmentally sound technical solutions. In general, a more integrated approach to mine action was needed. Mine action should be included in humanitarian and development plans and a long-term approach and commitment was vital. Multilateral and bilateral programmes relating to security and development should include a gender perspective. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and others provided a framework, as did the revised Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes. Lithuania would continue to cooperate with and assist the mine action community, and intended to contribute to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action.

84. **The Chair** invited the Committee to take action on draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.6 on assistance in mine action. Announcing that Andorra, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Costa Rica, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Serbia and Tajikistan had become sponsors of the draft resolution, she said that no programme budget implications were anticipated.

85. *Draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.6 was adopted without a vote.*

86. **Mr. Titov** (Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions, Department of Peacekeeping Operations) said that he had taken note of the need to ensure that work on mine action was results-oriented, comprehensive and effective. The forthcoming Joint Inspection Unit report would be circulated internally in December and he would provide a briefing on its contents. Light weapons would remain a major challenge in the years to come, requiring focus, perseverance, sustainable action and predictable financing.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*