

Statement by Mr. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, Pakistan Delegate in the General Debate of the Special Political and Decolonization (4th) Committee on Agenda item 27: Assistance in Mine Action

Mr. Chairman,

1. Pakistan supports UN and international efforts to address humanitarian situations resulting from indiscriminate and irresponsible use of mines and unexploded ordnance.

2. We believe our discussion under the agenda item must be focused on humanitarian de-mining, and in that context, on the assistance in mine clearance and rehabilitation of mine victims, and other activities such as raising awareness in and national capacity building of mine affected states in modern de-mining techniques. We would also like to underline here that the development and implementation of policies, strategies and activities of the organization related to mine action must be approved and reviewed by the Member States. Any attempt, direct or indirect, to impose treaty obligations on non states parties in the name of assistance in mine clearance and mine action should not be allowed. Apart from questions over legality or value addition, such efforts may be counterproductive to the noble and shared objective to assist in mine clearance.

3. Pakistan supports the eventual elimination of anti-personnel mines. However, Pakistan was unable to join the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty due to its legitimate security concerns. It would be difficult to realize a universal ban on landmines unless and until viable alternatives were available. In the meanwhile, Pakistan is favourably inclined towards negotiating an international legal instrument against the transfer of APLs at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

4. Pakistan is a party to the amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons which allows responsible uses of landmines. Consistent with its obligations under the Protocol, Pakistan has regulated the use of anti-personnel mines, including inter alia the effective exclusion of civilians from mined areas through marking, fencing and monitoring. Pakistan produces only detectable antipersonnel mines since 1 January 1997. Pakistan declared a unilateral moratorium on the export of land mines in March 1997, which was reinforced by the issuance of a notification (SRO) by the Government on 25 February 1999 under the Import and Export (Control) Act, 1950. It may be mentioned that this moratorium is voluntary and is not required under Protocol II of the CCW.

Mr. Chairman,

5. Millions of civilians are threatened by mines in the mine affected countries. Unexploded mines and ordnance place a heavy burden on social and economic reconstruction of war ravaged countries. The need to put more resources and efforts into mine clearance operations, and socio-economic rehabilitation and development is therefore evident. A sustained collective effort is required.

6. When we speak on this issue, we do so with an accomplished record of contribution to this collective effort. Known for their high professional standards, Pakistani troops have been confidently employed by the UN in various humanitarian de-mining operations with excellent results. Pakistani peace-keeping contingents have also voluntarily offered to assist local authorities in mine clearance. Pakistan has participated in de-mining operations under UN auspices in Kuwait, Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Somalia, Eastern Slovenia, Western Sahara and Bosnia.

7. In **Kuwait**, in the aftermath of the first Gulf war, Pakistan participated in the biggest Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) operation of recent history. The tasks performed by Pakistani personnel in Kuwait included: lifting of 95 km of mines; clearance of 8 major dumps each having 600-700 tons of ammunition; destruction of 500 tons of unserviceable ammunition; EOD clearance (all types) on an area of 400 sq km; barbed wire clearance over 95 sq km; recovery and back-loading of 4500 damaged/destroyed vehicles; and backfilling of lines of defense including trenches, bunkers, and gun emplacement.

8. **Angola** was the third heaviest mine infested country in the world after Cambodia and Afghanistan. Pakistan was selected to undertake mine clearance operations and impart training by establishing UN De-mining School in Cambodia for the purpose. The UN plan envisaged establishing a headquarters at national level and deployment of four de-mining brigades at the regional level. Of the 4 regional HQs, two were fully made up of Pakistani personnel and one had mixed UN contribution, headed by a Pakistani officer.

9. In **Afghanistan**, landmines and unexploded ordnance caused a humanitarian tragedy that afflicted civilians, largely women and children. Pakistan contributed to "operation salam" by establishing training camps on humanitarian grounds to provide training in mine clearance and explosive neutralization techniques. Since 1989, Pakistan played an active role in the de-mining operations in Afghanistan by providing military contingents, mine detectors, training facilities and medical facilities for de-miners injured in mine clearance operation. We have also been providing medical facilities including artificial limbs to Afghan mine victims.

10. We have provided training assistance for humanitarian de-mining in Sri Lanka. Pakistan will also be contributing to the mine clearance operations in Sudan.

11. From our experience in de-mining we have drawn the following conclusions that we would like to share with member states:

- Response signal of 8 gms or more of iron is not the only method to ensure detectability of mines.
- Mines laid by professional armed forces, if duly marked, fenced and monitored, remain 100 percent detectable to the user, and pose minimal humanitarian risk.
- Technologically advanced mine detectors ensure effective de-mining, even of non-detectable mines.
- Detectability of MOTAPM (Mines Other Than Anti-Personnel Mines) is not linked to the success of humanitarian de-mining operations.
- De-mining of areas affected by civil wars involving warring factions does prove difficult, but our experience of de-mining in such situations has proven that while it is time consuming and labour intensive as well as fraught with dangers for de-

miners, an integrated approach like the one practiced in Angola and Kuwait can overcome the difficulties and achieve the desired objectives.

12. While concluding we hope all Member States would have the humanitarian dimension of the issue foremost in our considerations and in that context would be able to adopt the draft resolution under discussion by consensus.

Thank you.