
Mr. President,

The nature and the scope of the problem created by the irresponsible uses of land mines is enormous. Almost 40 percent of the UN Member States face the problem of land mines in one form or another. The victims are mostly innocent civilians, women and children, during and after conflicts.

2. The latest figures show that an estimated 110 million anti-personnel mines are scattered around 70 countries. This alarming situation needs immediate remedial measures.

3. In our neighbourhood, Afghanistan has to cope with the scourge of over 10 million landmines, which cause hundreds of casualties every month. Added to this problem is the existence of unexploded ordnance. Two decades of foreign occupation and internecine war has left the entire country infested with landmines and unexploded ordnance. Despite the paucity of Pakistan's medical facilities, hundreds of Afghan mine victims are being treated in our hospitals and health centers. Many have been provided artificial limbs to rehabilitate their lives and livelihood.

Mr. President,

4. Encouragingly, there is today greater international realization of the need to address the problems posed by landmines and unexploded ordnance. The Secretary General's report entitled “Assistance in Mine Action” (A/58/260) and the Third-Year review of the Five-Year United Nations Mine Strategy (A/58/260/Add.1) reflects these positive trends. The successes noted in the Secretary General's report are worth recounting:

- Greater awareness on mine action problems through use of information technology;
- Improved capacity to respond to emergencies. In this regard emergency Mine Action Programme for Iraq and seven other priority countries, including Afghanistan, have received greater attention from the United Nations agencies;
- Capacity building among 30-nations to cope with the emergencies relating to landmines and unexploded ordnance;
- Enhanced resource mobilization has had positive impact in increasing the mine action coverage area. As compared to the donation of $28 million, received by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) last year, $67 million has been mobilized this year.

Mr. President,

5. However, there are four areas which need immediate and concerted efforts:

First: There is a need to increase the programme outreach of the UNMAS through electronic and print media. Radio and Television can play a vital role in raising awareness among people living in mine-infested regions and sensitizing the donor countries at the popular level to remain engaged in mine-action activities.
Second: Increase the participation of national authorities in Mine-Action Programme by providing equipment and training to the local people. This can further lessen the time required for de-mining operations.

Third: Modern de-mining technologies be made available to the affected countries so that de-mining operations could gather pace and enhance safety of the personnel involved in such operations.

Fourth: De-mining operations should be supplemented with rehabilitation programmes for the people such as providing artificial limbs to mine victims and affording them job opportunities closer to their homes.

Mr. President,

6. Pakistan is committed to peace and prosperity of humanity. Apart from being the largest troop contributor to UN-led peace-keeping operations, Pakistan has actively contributed to the de-mining operations in several affected countries in the past. Pakistan participated in the de-mining operations in Kuwait, Cambodia, Angola, Bosnia and Western Sahara. We are also helping in de-mining operations in Sierra Leone and Democratic Republic of Congo. We will be ready to provide training facilities to the mine-affected countries.

7. Pakistan is against the irresponsible use of landmines which has caused so much destruction and misery. Pakistan remains committed to ensuring the highest standards of responsibility in the use of these defensive weapons. Pakistan is a party to the Amended Protocol-II of the Certain Conventional Weapons Convention (CCW) that regulates the use of landmines, in both internal and external conflicts, to prevent civilians from falling victim to landmines. We are continuing to implement the Protocol with the greatest earnestness.

8. Pakistan enjoys a unique record of clearing all mine-fields after the three wars in South Asia. There has never been a humanitarian situation caused by the use of these mines. We remain committed to ensuring that mines in our military inventory will never become a cause for civilian casualties in Pakistan or elsewhere in the world.

9. Churchill once said: “The UN is not to take us to heaven but to save us from hell”. Let us together save the world from the hell of landmines and wars.

I thank you, Mr. President