

PKO and Mine Action: @PKO Now! No.8

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Framework of Mine Action

In many conflict-affected or post-conflict regions, buried mines or abandoned unexploded ordnances seriously threaten the lives and welfare of local residents including women and children, render farmland and residential areas unusable, and prevent the early return of affected populations and displaced persons, as well as inhibit rehabilitation and reconstruction activities. In 1992, the former UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, presented a report entitled "An Agenda for Peace",¹ and stated 'de-mining should be emphasized in the terms of reference of peace-keeping operations and is crucially important in the restoration of activity when peace-building is under way.' After this report was published, in 1997 the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) was established within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations as the focal point for mine action.² UNMAS coordinates all the United Nations' mine-related activities, funds, and programmes, and implements them as part of the UN peacekeeping operations five pillars of mine action: advocacy, mine risk education, stockpile destruction, victim assistance and mine clearance. Mine-related activities for civilians are called humanitarian mine action and are different to military de-mining which aims to aid movement on the battlefield.

In tandem with developments in humanitarian mine action at the UN, in October 1996 representatives of 70 governments, including Japan, and international NGOs gathered in Ottawa, the capital of Canada, to hold a meeting on the total elimination of anti-personnel landmines. As a result of the "Ottawa Process" as it was called, in March 1999 the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention entered into force.

Experiences of Mine Action by the UN Peacekeeping Operations

UNMAS currently carries out support activities in eight UNPKO missions.³ For instance, in the Republic of South Sudan, where Japan has also dispatched members of the International Peace Cooperation Corps, the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) has been given authority under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1996 to 'support the Government of the Republic of South Sudan in conducting de-mining activities within available resources and strengthening the capacity of the Republic of South Sudan Demining Authority to conduct mine action in accordance with International Mine Action Standards'.⁴ Based on this mandate, in addition to mine action for humanitarian purposes, UNMISS also carries out de-mining and reconstruction of major roads to assist its own activities and for the safe and continual return of refugees and displaced persons. Furthermore, UNMISS conducts mine risk education for particularly refugees and displaced persons, as well as helps to strengthen the capacity of the mine action authority of the Government of the Republic of South Sudan.⁵

Efforts by Japan

The government of Japan consistently supports the international efforts towards the absolute ban of anti-personnel mines. Since signing the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in 1997, the Government of Japan has contributed around 38 billion yen (USD 413 million) in the period between 1998 and 2009, as well as dispatched experts to the mine action centers of many countries. The Government of Japan has also supported the activities of UNMAS by contributing voluntary funds through the Trust Fund for Human Security.⁶ This year, the Government of Japan decided to contribute USD 8.3 million for humanitarian assistance through UNMAS.⁷

In addition to the efforts by the government, Japanese NGO s are also engaged in various mine-related activities. For example, in connection to the activities in the Republic of South Sudan mentioned above, a Japanese NGO called the Association for Aid and Relief Japan (AAR Japan) has been operating in Sudan before the independence of South Sudan in

cooperation with UNMAS and the Government of Sudan. ARR Japan prepares learning material for mine risk education and teaches classes with that material to protect local populations from threats caused by mines or unexploded ordnances.⁸ The need for mine action activities has becoming increasingly important for creating a peaceful environment that prevents more people from the harm caused by mines. This is an issue which the international community, the United Nations and other international agencies, governments, NGO s and civil society need to work on together.

End Notes

¹ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping*, UN Doc. A/47/277, S/24111 (17 June 1992)

² UNMAS was established through an amalgamation of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the Demining Unit and the Mine Clearance and Policy Unit (MCPU) of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), which is now the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). UNMAS is currently positioned within the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions in DPKO.

³ UNMAS. *UNMAS Mine Action Programming Handbook*. January 2012. The missions currently operated by UNMAS are UNAMA, UNMISS, MONUSCO, UNIFIL, UNSOA, UNAMID, UNISFA, MINURSO.

⁴ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1996 (S/RES/1996, 8 July 2011) Operative Paragraph 3 (vi)

⁵ Regarding the activities in the Republic of South Sudan, refer to the UNMAS Mine Action Programming Handbook, section 4.4.10 South Sudan (referred in above [4]). Also refer to UNMAS. *Mine Action Portfolio Final 2011* for individual projects in Sudan southern region before independence.

⁶ The Trust Fund for Human Security was established by the Government of Japan to translate the concept of human security into concrete activities implemented by UN agencies through support to projects that address diverse threats including poverty, environmental degradation, conflicts, mines, refugee problems, illicit drugs, and infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, and thus to secure people's lives, livelihoods, and dignity in the real world. (Global Issues Cooperation Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. *The Trust Fund for Human Security*. October 2011)

⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Press Release. (30 March 2012)

⁸ Association for Aid and Relief, Japan website (<http://www.aarjapan.gr.jp/english/>)