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## Anti-personnel Landmines: A 10-year Review of EU Action

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# Anti-personnel Landmines

## A 10-YEAR REVIEW OF EU ACTION

by Daniela Dicorrado-Andreoni [ External Relations Directorate General European Commission ]

### Comic Strip Addresses Afghan Mine Crisis

For the month of May 2005, *Funky Winkerbean*, a comic strip created by high school teacher Tom Batiuk, addressed the landmine crisis in Afghanistan. It featured an American soldier who returns from a tour in Afghanistan during a war. He is haunted by the fear that the people he met while in Afghanistan may fall victim to landmines. After attending counseling through Veteran's Affairs, he decides to go back to Kabul on his honeymoon through the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation's Campaign for a Landmine-Free World, a movement started in 1991. *Funky Winkerbean* debuted in 1972 and is currently published in over 400 newspapers in the United States.

### Burning Landmines Proves Safer

A new invention called the Mineburner, developed by Council for Scientific and Industrial Research Defencetek, a company collaborating with the South African Department of Defence, demines landmines by burning them instead of detonating them. The device, which uses cheap natural gas, can be placed next to a landmine and set on fire through a radio device. The fire then burns through the mine before eventually setting it off, which may result in a small explosion. An advantage of this new device is that the Mineburner is light, making it easier to transport and cheaper to ship than previous methods. Currently, deminers often use explosives to detonate mines by placing them on top of the landmines and then exploding them. The Mineburner is also safer as it does not require the transportation of explosives.

This issue of the *Journal of Mine Action* comes at an important juncture in the European Community's (EC's) fight against landmines and is the right moment to look back and reflect.

November 2004 brought the first Review Conference of the Anti-personnel Landmine Ban Convention (MBC) in Nairobi, which marked significant progress made by the international community in this area. The EC's Multi-Annual Programme and Strategy 2005–2007 was adopted at the end of 2004, which responded to the Nairobi Action Plan.

The first Review Conference of the MBC, "The 2004 Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World" (29 November–3 December 2004), represented a momentous event in the Convention's life. At this juncture, the EC sent a message of determination and trust in the ability of the international community to achieve total control of the threats posed by landmines.

The European Union (EU) felt that the first Review Conference in Nairobi was successful and results-oriented, and it came away with a spirit of optimism, having been party to the degree of progress that can be made with international cooperation and a multilateral approach.

A huge amount of work needs to be done physically, politically and psychologically to counter the devastating consequences of APLs. A number of countries continue to use APLs and some are also believed to continue to produce landmines—approximately 65 countries remain

affected to some degree by mines and UXO. Global estimates of new landmine casualties each year vary between 15,000 and 20,000 people, many of whom are civilians, including children.

Clearly, the international community must continue to support mine action programmes, both in political and financial terms; failure to give these efforts sufficient priority would have enormous human costs. Assistance in mine clearance and stockpile destruction must continue, but the EU believes that the emphasis should focus more on victim assistance and mine risk education (MRE) in order to address the humanitarian and medical consequences that mine-affected countries face.

Support for international mine action continues to be among the most important political priorities of the EU. It can bring promotion of peace and stability globally and lessen human suffering in mine-affected regions.

### Actions to Date

The impact caused by APLs on human life and security prompted EU action. In the period 1992–98, the EC alone committed over €180 million to mine action worldwide to support

*The JRC has expertise in technologies for mine detection and identification, and has co-funded a project that successfully introduced a new metal detector to the market.*



PHOTO: COUNCIL OF EUROPE

mine action programmes, research and the development of technology and assistance to mine victims. It is now recognised as one of the leading contributors to mine action within the international community. In the same period, EU member states carried out bilateral actions on a similar scale.

The Council of Ministers has been actively engaged in the APL issue since 1995 through joint actions and resolutions, diplomatic demarches and dialogue with non-EU countries. The Council has had additional involvement through international fora such as the United Nations, through active participation in the Ottawa process and through practical action. In 1996, the EU committed itself to "the goal of the total elimination of anti-personnel landmines" and to actively work "towards the achievement at the earliest possible date of an effective international agreement to ban these weapons worldwide." In 1997, this goal was extended to cover all transfers of APLs as well as the requirement to take the legal measures to ban the production of APLs within the Union.

The EU welcomed the adoption of the MBC in Oslo on 18 September 1997 and sought to promote all efforts likely to contribute to the goal of total elimination of APLs and to solving the problems caused by these weapons. It was on this basis that all 15 then-member states of the Union attended the Ottawa Conference from 2–4 December 1997, and 14 of them signed the MBC. The EU supported mine action financially through various institutions, in particular the U.N. Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The EU is today the largest single contributor to both the United Nations and the ICRC for funds related to mine action. These contributions do not include the considerable bilateral contributions by individual member states.

Since 1995, the European parliament has been strongly committed to the APL issue and has acted as a consistent advocate of the total ban through successive resolutions and questions. The Parliamentary Assembly adopted on 26 September 1996, called for African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries and EU member states to engage energetically in demining actions, for more research into demining techniques and for significant progress to be made in achieving a global ban on APLs. The European Parliament resolution on APLs of 18 December 1997, in addition to encouraging wider adherence to the MBC and its early ratification, also called for more effective coordination of international efforts in mine clearance and in the rehabilitation of victims.

The Development Council Resolution of 22 November 1996 introduced a degree of conditionality into EU mine clearance programmes. With the exception of certain humanitarian situations, funds for mine clearance interventions should only be allocated to countries that have

ceased further use of APLs, taken steps to cease the trade, manufacture, and stockpiling of APLs and supported the proposed intervention. The EC's Joint Research Centre developed specific expertise in technology relevant to minefield surveys, mine detection and identification. It provides technological advice and technical support to other Commission departments, ongoing research projects, member states, non-EU states and other organisations.

During the period 1995–98, these varied interests within the EC were brought together in an ad hoc mine action coordination group. The creation of this group coincided with the greatly increased international focus and political engagement in relation to the landmine issue.

The real turning point in the EU approach to mine action occurred in 2000. In March of that year, the first anniversary date of the Ottawa Convention, the EC requested reinforcement of the EU contribution to the fight against landmines. In that year, the overall EU (member states and EC) contributions to APL issues reached a record €125 million.

In July 2001, the Council and the European parliament adopted a set of two regulations on the reinforcement of the EU response against APLs. These lay the foundations of the European integrated and focused policy. The same year, the EU member states and the EC together contributed a new record figure of €145 million.

From 1 March 1999 until 2003, the EU steadily increased its mine action funding. The total EU support over those 5 years reached the record figure of €700 million—almost one third of the total worldwide assistance generated since 1997—amounting to \$2 billion (U.S.) over seven years. This financial effort has consistently been accompanied by the political commitment to the universalisation of the MBC and to its processes.

The EC produces multi-annual strategies and programming, which integrate and complement annual and multi-annual commitments. The underlying principle of these strategies is that the EC efforts in this field should be directly related to the goals set by the international community and that the EC can be best appreciated for its catalysing capacity. The strategies' values are further enhanced by their capacity to offer a common platform to EU member states to coordinate and focus efforts and assistance on common objectives.

### **Multi-annual Strategy 2002–2004**

The Multi-annual Strategy and Programming for 2002–2004 addressed the mine problems in 33 countries and was endowed with a budget of €125,745,000. This figure represented an increase of 45 percent over the total EC contribution during the previous three years (€87 million).

Under the 2002–2004 strategy, priorities concentrated on threat reduction and capacity building. Thus, over those three years, the EC focused its assistance both on projects such as mine clear-

ance, MRE and stockpile destruction and on structural capacity building so as to raise the level of mine action management capacity in mine-affected countries. Such structural investments have to be made as early as possible in the life of a programme in order to bring about optimal efficiency on further mine action activities. Within the context of the MBC, this support was intended to lay the necessary foundations for the second lap of the Ottawa Convention regime coinciding with a new round of action resulting from the first Review Conference.

In the years covered by the 2002–2004 strategy, the EC strongly supported all nine Landmine Impact Surveys. These surveys were carried out for considerable enhancement of the decision making and priority setting of local mine action and related capacity and efficiency of local management.

### **Multi-annual Strategy 2005–2007**

This Multi-annual Strategy responds to the Nairobi Action Plan call to map out the remaining challenges posed by landmines. The overarching objective of the EC's policy in the area of APLs is represented by the "Zero Victim Target." To achieve this end, the EC will devote itself to furthering and strengthening international assistance in mine action by stimulating the implementation of the MBC through increased conditionality of assistance, by reducing the threat posed by landmines both on the ground and in stockpiles, and through massive MRE, marking and fencing. These actions are in addition to clearance and social, economic, and medical assistance to the local populations affected and their landmine victims. Reducing the risk of further victims as much as possible will be a significant step towards attaining the target of zero landmine victims as soon as possible.

In line with the letter and the spirit of the work of the Nairobi Summit, the Strategic Objective for EC mine action in 2005–2007 is "to drastically reduce the lingering threat and impact of landmines in the context of increased local security and regional confidence."

The roadmap defined to steer EC mine action towards this goal operates on the basis of the following three thematic objectives:

1. To reduce the APL threat
2. To alleviate mine victim suffering and aid socio-economic reintegration
3. To enhance local and regional impacts of effective mine action capacity

### **"Mainstreaming": EC Mine Action and Development Strategies**

The most evident priority is the essential need to fully integrate mine action into development programmes in the field to ensure the significant funds being committed to mine action globally are used more efficiently and the effectiveness of these activities is greatly increased. It also guarantees that mine action is conducted in full coher-

ence with the real development needs of the local populations. The EC has acquired experience and capacity in ensuring the mainstreaming of thematic aid into geographic assistance. National programmes for developing individual countries are defined in synergy with a more global approach and strategy to fight landmines. The process consists of elaborating the following consecutively (in conjunction with the beneficiary countries): multi-annual Country Strategy Papers (CSP), National Indicative Programmes (NIPs) and action programmes, that give rise to the implementation of concrete projects. Endorsement by the EC, its member states and the beneficiary countries is required before implementation. We therefore continue to encourage mine-affected countries to prioritise post-conflict rehabilitation needs within their national development programme to allow such assistance.

The EC funds used to support mine action come from a number of geographic budget lines supplemented by the thematic landmine budget line when specific needs demand particular efforts. These mechanisms provide total EC funds for mine action of approximately €40 million per year.

Identifying the needs and the means to tackle them takes place at the country level in a comprehensive, viable and sustainable way with all instruments being used in a mutually reinforcing way. When geographic assistance needs reinforcing, the thematic budget is triggered in a planned and integrated way in the framework of the annual work programmes—in which EC delegations in non-EU countries have an essential role to play through the identification of actions to be implemented. This trend will be even more pronounced and perceivable from this year onward, as project management will be delegated to the EC delegations wherever possible. Specific ad hoc interventions in reaction to sudden humanitarian or security crises are also possible thanks to the EC Humanitarian Office (ECHO) and the Rapid Reaction Mechanism.

### Victim Assistance and MRE

The EC believes that assistance to mine-affected countries or regions must be considered within the context of their humanitarian and socio-economic problems. The EC aims to increase human security and enable populations to return to their homes, resume their former activities, have access to basic resources and earn their living. EC-funded mine action projects are therefore often part of integrated programmes that include actions to remove the threat of landmines through clearance, area reduction and

stockpile destruction, as well as actions to reinforce local capacity and mine action efficiency through technical assistance and impact surveys.

Victim assistance, which should build on de facto national policies where they exist, is an important component of development aid. Besides the necessary medical assistance to mine victims, it is crucial to support their socio-economic rehabilitation. Enabling disabled people to become self-sufficient—by providing professional training, helping them to find jobs, and giving them the means to buy equipment or to obtain financial credit—is not only a way for them to cease being a burden for their families and communities, but also a way to regain dignity. It is a right that each human being should be granted—whatever his country, ethnic origin, gender, or social position. It is the responsibility of each affected country, and of the international community, to assure that the rights of the disabled are guaranteed in legislation and are fully respected.



*The EC has long supported research and development of new mine action technologies like the tool shown above, a multi-sensor that combines the powers of ground-penetrating radar, infrared cameras and metal detectors.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF EC

Morcover, in countries that are not states parties to the MBC and are therefore less driven by international aid, victim assistance, as well as other humanitarian actions such as risk reduction and risk education, can provide an answer to avoid leaving aside affected populations.

The EC therefore believes that the emphasis on victim assistance needs to be strengthened, something that mainstreaming mine action into wider development—in particular the health sector—will ensure. MRE also continues to be an extremely important tool in raising the awareness of local populations affected by landmines and in reducing the human suffering that the mines cause.

As drafting begins for the next EC strategy for mine action (2005–2007), the EC will support stronger focus on victim assistance and continue to support mine education activities in those areas where its need remains a priority. In response to the challenges still to be faced, the EU policy will build on its positive achievements, introduce greater coherence, enhance the effectiveness of its

actions and ensure its important role in the international community. It will also contribute to intensified international cooperation and coordination. The overall aim, together with other members of the international mine action community, is to support the elimination of the scourge of APLs within the next 10 to 15 years.

The EC recognises the political and humanitarian importance of sustaining its contribution to overcoming the worldwide problems of APLs, and intends to continue its efforts with even greater resolve, coherence and effectiveness. The EU is currently supporting actions in the most afflicted countries, including Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, Croatia, northern Iraq, Laos, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Somalia and Zimbabwe. In many of these countries it is the major contributor to mine action.

### Landmine Clearance

Landmine clearance and area reduction will continue to be the top priorities for the EC. Significant effort must continue in reducing the size and scope of mined areas and thereby permanently reducing the threat to the affected populations.

Much has been achieved in helping affected countries acquire the appropriate capacity, such as relevant data, skills, equipment and software in order to plan their priorities and to manage mine issues in a competent and skilful way. In many cases, the capacity is now available and the focus of EC mine action will therefore slowly shift towards ongoing support to mine clearance and further focus on MRE and victim assistance. If gaps in capacity remain, effort will be made to address and fill them.

The efficiency of operations on the ground has also been increased over time through measuring performances, learning lessons and assessing their long-term impact. This process of learning best practice and improving approaches will continue to ensure that mine clearance can be as effective as possible. Our aim is to share all the experiences and lessons learned with the entire mine action community so international efforts can continue to improve their effectiveness. ♦

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