

Speaking Notes on Cooperation and Assistance of Austria

Mr. President,

I am pleased to take the floor briefly under the agenda item cooperation and assistance.

The effect of indiscriminate weapons on civilian populations continues to be an issue to which Austria attaches particular importance. We try to address this issue from a legal point of view, in terms of strengthening norms of international humanitarian law and human rights law. Let me mention in this context the important Security Council Resolution (1894 / 2009) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, the adoption of which was one of Austria's key priorities during our non-permanent membership in the Security Council in 2009 and 2010.

The protection of civilians in armed conflict and from the effects of indiscriminate weapons used in such conflicts, however, is also the main foundation of our work in the framework of the Mine-Ban Convention. We were very pleased and impressed to see the continued focus and engagement by mine-affected states and the strong commitment to solve their respective mine action challenges. We would like to thank all States Parties that have provided updates about their efforts.

Austria has been providing funding for mine action since the mid-1990s and in several countries. However, like many states, we recently had to absorb cuts in our budget for humanitarian assistance and development cooperation and also for mine-action.

I am pleased to inform you that the Austrian government has nevertheless been able to make funds available for mine action for 2012. In fact, I am pleased to say that despite the overall financial crisis, we will have a slight increase of our specific mine-action funding levels to approx. 1,9 mio Euro or 2,5 mio USD.

The following projects have already been decided and the respective contracts are already concluded or are in a state of preparation

In East Africa, Austria is providing funding for Mine Risk Education Projects in Somalia in cooperation with UNMAS and UNICEF (Euro 650.000,--) and for victim assistance in Ethiopia in cooperation with the ICRC (Euro 350.000,--)

In Afghanistan and Lebanon, Austria has contributed Euro 175,000,-- to clearance and victim assistance

Furthermore, I am pleased to announce that I will sign on behalf of Austria the partnership principles for the implementation of the national mine action strategy with the Kingdom of Cambodia in conjunction with the pledge of an amount of 400.000 Euros over the next two years.

An amount of Euro 300.000,-- will be allocated in support of mine clearance activities and 100.000,-- for victim assistance projects.

Austria will thus be in a position for the 1st time to contribute bilaterally to the resolution of the terrible landmines and ERW legacy that our generous host country has to cope with.

In addition, I am pleased to announce a further

Euro 200.000,-- for emergency UXO clearance operations in Libya

as well as Euro 100.000,-- for UXO Clearance in Laos

These projects, with some other contributions in the area of advocacy amount to 1,9 Mio Euro.
or 2,5 Mio USD.

Mr. President, Austria remains committed to provide mine action assistance and cooperation
in the future, even in times of difficult budgetary situations to contribute to our joint
endeavour.

Thank you