



Communication

Somalia: Puntland authorities grant unprecedented access to their stockpiles, request international assistance for humanitarian mine action.

Geneva, 30 September 2007 – As an act of good faith following allegations of anti-personnel (AP) mine acquisition, the Puntland authorities reiterated their commitment to the AP mine ban and granted Geneva Call unprecedented access to their military stockpiles. In addition, they confirmed their readiness to immediately destroy AP mines and other explosive ordnances in their possession, and requested international assistance for mine action. Puntland signed the Geneva Call “*Deed of Commitment for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action*” in November 2002. By signing the *Deed of Commitment*, the Puntland authorities, as well as 33 other armed non-State actors around the world, committed to renounce the use of AP mines, to destroy their AP mines stocks and to cooperate in mine action in areas under their control.

Geneva Call routinely undertakes field missions to monitor compliance with, and implementation of, the *Deed of Commitment*. The two recent visits to Puntland, undertaken with the assistance of the Puntland Mine Action Centre (PMAC) from 18 to 21 July and 12 to 19 August 2007, were particularly important as they sought to address allegations of AP mine acquisition issued by the Monitoring Group on violations of the UN arms embargo in Somalia. In its 22 November 2006 report, the Monitoring Group reported that Ethiopia – a State party to the 1997 Ottawa Convention – had provided military training and equipment, including 180 AP mines and other unspecified landmines, to Puntland’s armed forces in August and September 2006 (see UNSG S/2006/913, paragraphs 68 and 75).

Pursuant to Article 3 of the *Deed of Commitment*, which requires cooperation in the monitoring and verification of compliance, including the provision of information and field visits, Geneva Call requested clarification from Puntland. In a letter to Geneva Call dated 10 January 2007, the Vice-President of Puntland, M. Hassan Dahir Mohamud, promptly responded to the allegations by denying any AP mine transfer from Ethiopia. Geneva Call also wrote to the Chair of the Monitoring Group to seek more information, but did not receive a response. During meetings with Geneva Call in Garowe in July 2007, M. Jama Hersi Farah, Minister of State for Security, strongly denied the allegations, and reiterated Puntland’s respect of the provisions of the *Deed of Commitment*. Geneva Call also discussed the allegations with Col. Abdisamad Ali Shire, General Commander of Puntland’s armed forces, who, in compliance with the *Deed of Commitment*, granted Geneva Call access to stockpiles in military camps in Galkayo and Garowe. While no AP mines were sighted in the Galkayo camp, Geneva Call examined large amounts of abandoned ammunition, including BM-21 rockets, and anti-vehicle mines requiring urgent safe storage and destruction. In the Garowe camp, Geneva Call was able to verify that the small number of AP mines Puntland had disclosed in September 2004 (48 PMP-71) remained stored and were awaiting destruction. During the missions, the Puntland authorities pledged to complete the inventory of AP mine stocks in all military camps. They also requested the necessary international assistance to destroy its mine stocks and other unsafe explosive ordnances.

While it is very challenging to verify allegations of landmine acquisition and to know whether all stockpiles have been declared, Geneva Call wishes to commend the constructive attitude of the Puntland authorities, who responded by showing unprecedented transparency and by confirming their commitment to destroy their AP mines stocks. Geneva Call hopes that similar transparency and cooperation will be sought on this matter from the government of Ethiopia and calls on the international community to support humanitarian mine action in Puntland.

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