



4 April

International Mine Action Day



On 8 December 2005, the UN General Assembly Resolution *A/RES/60/97* declared April 4th as the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. On 4 April 2007, Tajikistan Mine Action Centre (TMAC) commemorated this official day by hosting a public day at Tajikistan Mine Detecting Dog Centre, at the Engineering Battalion of the Ministry of Defence of Tajikistan, located in Rudaki district.

Landmines kill or injure approximately 15 – 20 thousand people every year worldwide; that is one person every minute. A third of these casualties are children. Since 1975, there are more than one million mine victims all over the world, 80 % of which are civilians. Since 1992, more than 600 people have been killed or injured as the result of landmines in Tajikistan. In 2006 alone, 20 landmine casualties were reported in Tajikistan including 6 fatalities.

The response of the international community to this humanitarian crisis which was the result of expanding of mines and UXOs, led to adoption of the Ottawa Convention formally known as the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction* dated of 18 September, 1997. The Convention came into the force on 1 March 1999. Since 1 April 2000, Tajikistan has been a member state to the treaty while 153 member states are currently signatories. The Convention is based on the principles of international humanitarian law. These principles prohibit the use of weapons intended to cause severe injury or unnecessary suffering. Landmines do not distinguish between civilians and combatants.

The National Mine Action Programme is established within the framework of its international obligations and commenced its activities in the second half of 2003. The major objectives of the programme are:

- Clearance of mine-contaminated areas;
- Destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines;
- Conduct Mine Risk Education (MRE);
- Provide Assistance to Mine Victims;
- Advocacy.

Since the beginning of the programme, approximately 863 communities have been surveyed and 150 mined areas have been discovered. A total area of more than 500,000 square meters have been cleared, more than 3,000 large hazard warnings signs near the perimeter of suspected areas installed and more than 3,200 mines/ UXOs destroyed. MRE and Assistance to Mine Victims projects are currently being implemented in smoothly.

At this year's Annual Mine Action Day celebrations, held at the Mine Detecting Dog Centre of the Ministry of Defence's Engineering Battalion, representatives of government ministries, international organizations, diplomatic missions of donor countries, members of the media as well as landmine survivors took part.

On behalf of the Government of Tajikistan, Chairman of the Commission on the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law (CIIHL), Head of the Department of Defence,

Legal Discipline of the Executive Board of the President of Tajikistan Mr. Abdurahmon AZIMOV made a speech in which he stressed the importance of the UN General Assembly Resolution. He highlighted the negative impact of landmines on economic and social development of the mine-affected areas. Mr. AZIMOV thanked all the donors for their support in implementation of the Tajik Mine Action Programme and noted that the Government of Tajikistan is ready to cooperate with all countries and international organizations on the issue of ban of antipersonnel landmines. Representatives of UNDP and OSCE made speeches on behalf of their respective organizations.

FSD teams demonstrated how deminers detect landmines by means of detectors and other equipment while the participants glanced at displays of MRE and Victim Assistance material. These two projects are currently being implemented in conjunction with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Education, Labour & Social Protection, Defence, Health, Emergency Situations, the Border Forces, Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan (RCST), UNDP, UNICEF, ICRC and OSCE.

Tajik Mine Action Centre