



DEMINE AND INCREASING THE BORDER SURVEILLANCE CAPACITY AT THE EASTERN BORDERS OF
TURKEY - PHASE 3

2nd STEERING COMMITTEE (KICK-OFF) MEETING

17th May 2021 at 14:00

Videoconference

Participants*	<p>European Union Delegation (EUD) Ulrich RAINER, Programme Officer Esther Bouma, Deputy Head of Section</p> <p>Strategy and Budget Office (SBO) E. Canan Sarıtaş, Expert Gülüzar Güleç, Assistant Expert Muradiye Lap, Assistant Expert Abdullah Faruk Şener, Assistant Expert</p> <p>Ministry of Interior İlayda Şimşer, EU Expert</p> <p>Turkish Mine Action Center (TURMAC) Colonel Hasan Soydaş, TURMAC Director</p> <p>United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Seher Ariner, Assistant Resident Representative (Programme) Burcu Dıraor Aydın, Portfolio Manager Mark Frankish, Project Manager Sedat Has, Field Coordinator Ahmet Doğanay, Field Coordinator Mustafa İsmet Şimşek, Field Coordinator Seyyid Özdemir, Project Associate Derya Işır Özoğlu, Administrative Assistant/Interpreter</p> <p>Interpreter Gökçe Şengün</p>
Note taker	Derya Işır Özoğlu, Administrative Assistant/Interpreter, UNDP

* Listed in alphabetic order of organizations' name.

Meeting commenced at 14.00 with opening remarks and introduction by UNDP and TURMAC.



SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

1- Introduction of the new staff members

Prior to the opening addresses, new staff members have briefly introduced themselves and provided information regarding their roles within the project:

Ms. Burcu Dıraor Aydın, *Portfolio Manager* at UNDP

Ms. Derya Işır Özoğlu, *Administrative Assistant/Interpreter* at UNDP

Mr. Mustafa İsmet Şimşek, *Field Coordinator* at UNDP

Ms. Muradiye Lap at Presidency of Strategy and Budget

2- Opening Addresses by TURMAC and UNDP

Ms. Seher Ariner, on behalf of UNDP, welcomed the participants extending her belated good wishes for the Eid. She said: “The project team have been fully mobilised. Our colleagues will be covering all relevant functions in the project. I would like to congratulate all new members of the staff and wish success”.

“As you all are aware. The Project started in December following the agreement signed with the EU towards the end of the month. The agreement for Turkish government’s contribution was also signed around the same date. Since then, the inter-agency cooperation has been ensured through monthly management meetings. At present we are holding only the 2nd SCM; however, we have always maintained our communication. We held meetings and asked for your opinions regarding for example design of activities and in particular the field activities. Let me thank this opportunity to thank each one of you for your contributions”.

“We are implementing Phase III now. We produced significant outcomes in the first two phases alongside with important lessons learnt. As UNDP, we have been the first starting a demining project in Turkey. As far as I am aware the largest and most comprehensive demining operation was conducted as a part of this project. I am thrilled by the progress we made until so far. Since I have also been involved in the first two phases, I am able to compare and amazed to see what a great extent the inter-agency cooperation was enhanced. My conclusion is that the Turkish government provide greater support to this area and this project, and that the relevant capacity has been enhanced not only within the UNDP but also at national level. I believe that this would be key for the success of the project. I would like to underline the fact that we expect your continuous support, commitment and dedication”.

“It has been 5 months since the project started. The Inception Report was submitted to the EUD. It details the overall methodology to follow in the implementation phase. There were some amendments to the initial agreements, and we covered these in the report as well. The most important two aims of the inception were well achieved. Contractors were identified and signed contracts for demining, NTS and QA/QM. This was key for a timely start of operations. Their mobilisation also commenced”.

“The TAT members led by Mark will present you the progress made in the last five months. They will inform you about possible challenges and seek your guidance”. Ms. Ariner extended her gratitude to the MoND, Mol, the EU, Presidency of Strategy and Budget and TAT.

Colonel Hasan Soydaş, on behalf of TURMAC, briefly introduced himself and provided information regarding his experience within TURMAC. He said: “I was indirectly involved in the previous phases as the Head of Strategy and Budget Unit. And since the last 9 months I am acting as the Head of TURMAC and following closely the Phase III implementation. Thanks to highly experienced staff members working for TURMAC we were able to manage the previous phases smoothly. We encountered several obstacles and challenges in the preparations for Phase III prior to tendering phase. However, we got overwhelming support from all stakeholders and overcame the obstacles”.

“Hopefully NTS field operations will start as of 31st May. Then we will get flow of information from the field. This will be followed by clearance operations. The initial period did mostly compose of paperwork. We will now operate in the field through monitoring to ensure a smooth implementation. We expect remarkably successful outcomes which will bring considerable benefits for Turkey. This will be a joint success. I would like to thank all participants and stakeholders for their efforts and wish success”.

Mr. Ulrich Rainer, on behalf of TURMAC, welcomed the Steering Committee members

3- Discussions and Recommendations of the Steering Committee Members

UNDP PRESENTATION

Scope

UNDP

- An outline of the presentation was given.

Inceptions Phase Updates

- TAT members are fully mobilised with recent involvement of the Project Manager, NTS Field Coordinator and Administrative Assistant/Interpreter. Project office and field office was set up.
- Inception Report is near finalisation and following signatures are obtained, it will be distributed to all relevant stakeholders.
- Brief introduction was given regarding new staff members recently joining the UNDP.

Ms. Louisa Vintion, *Resident Representative*

Ms. Burcu Diraor Aydın, *Portfolio Manager*

Mr. Mark Frankish, *Project Manager*

Mr. Mustafa İsmet Şimşek, *Field Coordinator*

Ms. Derya Işır Özoğlu, *Administrative Assistant/Interpreter*

Implementation Phase Updates

- Main four components and activities under each component were briefly presented to the participants.
- Information was given regarding the Contractors; TDI/Altay and RPS Energy. Mobilisation and technical training have been ongoing since the contracts were signed.

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- Regarding the deminers of TDI/Altay, there has been a slight change in the approach due to Covid-19. At present the plan is to bring Zimbabwean teams to work alongside Turkish deminers. Because of the Covid-19 restrictions in place in Turkey, it became impossible to do recruitment and training in Turkey. That is why the renowned professional Zimbabwean teams are currently being trained in Zimbabwe where the pandemic has less impact.
 - Recruitment of Turkish deminers was problematic partially due to pandemic and because they attended demining operations in Azerbaijan. This initially caused challenges for TDI/Altay in the recruitment. It has been very recently confirmed by the company that 45 Turkish deminers signed contract. They have all been previously involved in Phase I and II which implies that trained and experience staff members were recruited.
 - Training mine detection dogs (MDDs) is as important as training the deminers. Since live animal importation was banned due to the pandemic, the dogs are still in Hungary. It is hoped to get permission from the relevant ministry by the end of the week to allow the importation of the MDDs. 18 detection dogs will be operating with 9 handlers. The training is ongoing in Hungary. The fact that the dogs are being trained using live explosives will reduce the amount of training required when they come into Turkey. A short video clip was demonstrated regarding the MDD training.
 - Regarding accreditation activities under 1.2, TDI/Altay and RPS are currently transitioning the 'organisational accreditation' phase. RPS will be accredited on 21st May. As a part of a staggered approach for TDI/Altay Zimbabwean team will be accredited first (in May) and the Turkish teams second (in July.). It is hoped they would be operational as soon as they are accredited.
 - Areas covered by Phase III were demonstrated on a map. It was initially planned to start demining operations in Ardahan; but it changed due to unfavourable weather conditions. When Zimbabwean teams are accredited, they will focus on Iğdır and TIGEM camp area. On the other hand, 15 minefields in Ardahan will most probably be cleared by Turkish teams after they get accreditation.
 - Information was given regarding Component 2. A tailor-made training packaged is being prepared. When the Covid-19 restrictions are eased, it is hoped to organise a face-to-face workshop in TURMAC to better understand the capacity building needs. Activities will be designed to ensure continuity of the capacity skill sets and knowledge.
 - In addition to the originally agreed development areas, we have also identified MRE, IMSMA and operational methodologies as additional areas of support.
 - Following the workshop, a capacity development plan will be drawn up and training will be delivered in line with international standards and practices. Potential trainers are UNDP TAT members, UNMAS and GICHD staff members etc.
 - A gender mainstreaming training course was delivered by the UNDP Gender Analyst in Q1 under capacity development component. A drone training was also completed.
 - Regarding MRE, UNDP have been working in cooperation with the TURMAC MRE Department. MRE strategy will be defined in line with the latest international standards.
 - 10 CSOs have been identified for MRE training. The list is being reviewed by the National Volunteering Committee (NVC). Potential CSO partners operate in several different areas including agriculture, child and health etc.

- Information was given regarding Activities 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4.
- The originally design 14 MRE training sessions will be considered as a pilot project.
- Information was given regarding Component 4. NTS activities will start in Sanliurfa at the end of May. A visual demonstration was given regarding typical minefields in Turkey.

Questions

Strategy and Budget Office

Does Phase III cover clearance of 4.2 million m² of land on its own, or does it represent the total size of the area in all three phases?

UNDP

It is just for the Phase III.

EUD

Will Zimbabwean deminers also operate in addition to 45 Turkish deminers or will they only work as trainers?

UNDP

There will be both Zimbabwean and Turkish demining teams operating. TDI/Altay originally proposed to bring in six Zimbabwean teams in the technical submission. The remaining nine teams (total of 15 teams) would be made up by Turkish nationals. Following the problems faced in the recruitment of the Turkish deminers, the company are proposing to increase the number of Zimbabwean teams to eight which means seven Turkish teams will be needed. 45 previously trained and experienced Turkish deminers equates to approximately four teams. So, currently 13 out of 15 teams have been formed.

EUD

Are we talking about six Zimbabwean teams composing of six people?

UNDP

Most probably it will be eight.

EUD

Is each team composed of six people? Does the number of deminers vary in each team?

UNDP

It depends on the level of supervision but generally each team is composed of ten deminers.

EUD

Then, it makes around eighty deminers, does not it?

UNDP

When all teams are fully functional, it will be around 130-140 people.

Strategy and Budget Office

Why did you select the Zimbabweans?

UNDP

The company, TDI, is based in Zimbabwe. Their deminers have worldwide experience. They were not selected by proposed by the company in the technical submission. Their proposal was accepted.

Procurement of Materials

UNDP

- Procurement of the project vehicle took longer than expected, due to lengthy approval process for diplomatic plate allocation by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). UNDP will go out for a tender once the allocation is approved by the MFA. Global price of the cars and lack of stocks also had an impact on tendering. A further call for proposals was launched and it is hoped to finalise the procurement this time.

There have been delays in the procurement of certain operational materials. This will not have an impact on the start of operations, though. It is expected to finalise the process by mid-June.

For MRE materials, logos initially approved by the EUD and MoND required revision. Currently the EUD are reviewing the latest revised version. EUD's decision is awaited to start the production.

Assumptions and Risk

UNDP

- Originally defined assumptions are still valid with major improvements.
- The most prominent risk is Covid-19. However, all necessary measures have been taken to ensure that disruption is kept to a minimum. UNDP TAT members have received their first vaccination.

Launch Event

UNDP

UNDP TAT members have identified priority actions for the organisation of the launch event and preparations are ongoing. It has been previously pencilled in for 29th June. The Steering Committee Members were invited to share their thoughts regarding a possible date and format of the event.

TURMAC

We are of the opinion that it would be ideal to have the event by the end of summer, considering the ongoing pandemic a national vaccination scheme. We believe that majority of the population will have been vaccinated by October. So, we highly recommend having the meeting around October this year.

EUD

Although we previously agreed for 29th June, we are happy to consider the new recommendation. Regarding the format of the event, we would not prefer an indoor event. Instead, it might occur outside.

UNDP

We would like to take this opportunity to promote the project to the greatest extent. Our main concern regarding October is that the weather conditions may be unfavourable. So, we may consider having it earlier around September.

TURMAC

It may occur early October when the weather is still fine. Currently, crowded face to face events is not favourable. We believe that the situation would improve by the course of time until October.

Strategy and Budget Office

We acknowledge the importance of the launch event; however, October is a very busy month for us due to the budget surveys. We would love to attend, although we cannot promise at this point. Regardless of when, where and how it occurs, we would suggest you provide online access. We

recommend you cover not only Phase III, but also the overall achievements and findings of the previous phases.

4- Questions and Answers

Question 1

EUD

Can we agree the location of the event today? This information is key for the preparations of a potential visit of the Head of EUD outside Ankara.

UNDP

Presence of the Head of EUD in the Launch Event is paramount importance.

EUD

At this point we need some information regarding the format of the event to ensure that he attends.

UNDP

We may consider holding the Launch Event in Ankara; but organising a separate field visit earlier around June. There are two options here: a combined activity where the Launch Event and field visit occur at the same time, or two separate events. New Resident Representative of the UNDP may also wish to accompany the Head of EUD in a potential field visit.

EUD

We can discuss the options in a separate meeting later.

Question 2

Strategy and Budget Office

EU financing may not be possible in the upcoming years to clear all minefields in the country. So, TURMAC should try to get most out of the project to be able to operate in mine clearance on their own in future.

Regarding the MDD training, Turkish National Police have a specific unit to train specialist dogs in the country. We, as SBO, are funding a national project to strengthen existing capacity of the unit. We believe that there is a chance to relate the demining project to the national project with a view to cooperate in training bomb disposal dogs.

UNDP

A degree of collaboration with TNP dog unit may be possible. However, it is worth to differentiate bomb disposal dogs from MDDs. Although they are technically different, there might be a room for cooperation under the umbrella of explosive detection dogs.

We would be pleased to contact the relevant officials from TNP to discuss possible areas of cooperation.

TURMAC

Regarding TURMAC conducting mine clearing operation using its own capacity, we have an ongoing national project to clear mines in Mardin. Tendering process will start soon to contract a Turkish company. We are following this up closely. If we do not have UNDP or EU involved in possible future projects, we are hoping to be in a position to own and implement the relevant operations.

EUD

A possible reason why the EU did not accept the proposals for future phases might be because it is too early considering that Phase III have just started. Another reason might be the fact that the proposals were not much different than what have been already achieved in all three phases. However, there is still a strong chance that the EU would support TURMAC's capacity development rather than funding the demining operations.

Question 3

UNDP

Which CSOs do the committee members recommend cooperating regarding MRE training?

TURMAC

We believe that Turkish Red Crescent and Search & Rescue Association (AKUT) should be a part of the list due to their far-reaching network across the country.

5- Closing

UNDP closed the meeting by thanking participants for their ongoing supports and contributions.