



## PRESS RELEASE

### **JOINT ASSESSMENT MISSION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ANTI-PERSONNEL MINE BAN CONVENTION IN ZIMBABWE**

**Harare, 11 July 2019:** The Commission of the African Union (AU), in collaboration with the United Nations Office to the AU (UNOAU), concluded an assessment of the implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) in the Republic of Zimbabwe. The assessment was undertaken from 9 to 11 July 2019 at the invitation of the Zimbabwe Ministry of Defence and War Veterans Affairs.

The joint assessment mission was undertaken against the background of the communiqué adopted by the AU Peace and Security Council, at its 837<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 4 April 2019. The Council called upon concerned States Parties to spare no effort to fulfil their obligations pursuant to the APMBC and realize the goal set by the Maputo Declaration to clear anti-personnel landmines in their territories by the year 2025.

The Joint assessment team received extensive briefings on the progress made in the implementation of the *National Mine Action Strategy 2018 – 2025* from the Mine Action Authority (NAMAAZ), and the Mine Action Centre (Zimac), as well as from the accredited demining operators; namely, Anti-Personnel Landmines Removal Product Development (Apopo), HALO Trust, Mines Advisory Group (MAG) and Norwegian Peoples' Aid (NPA).

The joint assessment team further visited the south-east zone of Masvingo Province to witness efforts by the Mine Clearance Squadron of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces to clear the Sango Border Post to Crooks Corner minefield, which lies along the border with Mozambique and South Africa. The minefield is one of several ones, which have the greatest impact on affected communities and is adjacent to the Gonarezhou National Park that hosts some of the world's prolific wildlife.

During the mission, a series of focused meetings and consultations were held with national line ministries and Government organs, which include the Parliament, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Public Services, Labor and Social Welfare, Ministry of Environment and Tourism, and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. The aim of these consultations was to promote and identify synergies between the mine action program and Zimbabwe's broader efforts to realize the Sustainable Development Goals, including through reducing death and disabilities caused by landmines, safeguarding livestock and livelihoods of impacted communities, as well as development of tourism and commercial farming.

On the final day of the visit, representatives of international partners and donors were briefed on the status of the mine action program and the outcomes of the joint assessment mission. It was highlighted that Zimbabwe is making consistent progress with the tremendous support of the demining operators and their partners. It was further stressed that, given sufficient financial resources, the country will be able to complete clearance by the year 2025. International partners were strongly encouraged to continue and increase support to clearance efforts as well as to victims' assistance.

At the end of the visit, the joint assessment team debriefed the Chief of Staff, Joint Operations and Plans of Zimbabwe Defence Forces, Air Vice Marshal JG Marangwanda, and mapped out a range of measures that the AU Commission and the United Nations can undertake in support of sustained implementation of the APMBC and strengthen regional and international partnerships towards the effective implementation of the national mine action strategy.

The assessment team paid a courtesy visit to the Minister of Defense and Veterans Affairs, Honorable Oppah Chamu Zvipange Muchinguri, who reaffirmed the commitment of the Government to meet its obligations under the APMBC, despite the economic challenges the country is contending with. Honorable Muchinguri further indicated that the Government is currently pursuing robust economic revitalization and that a mine-free Zimbabwe is an integral aspect of the country's economic recovery.