

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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HANOI, VIETNAM – Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung chaired Vietnam’s National Mine Action Steering Committee (NMASC) which was announced today.

The NMASC consists of 12 members, and is supported by a 21-member Standing Committee headed by Vice Minister of Defense and Vice Minister of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs.

Today Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung together with the members of the NMASC and the Standing Committee on Mine Action had a roundtable discussion with representatives of donor countries, international development agencies, and non-government organizations.

The objective of this roundtable was to discuss the contamination of unexploded landmine and bombs and its socio-economic impact in contaminated communities in Vietnam. Both the Government and the development partners also presented their perspectives on mine action priorities for funding over the next five years from both Vietnam state budget and official development assistance (ODA).

This mine action donor roundtable meeting took place the day before the Vietnam Consultative Group Meeting– the high-level annual dialogue between the Government of Vietnam and its international development partners on development policy and ODA.

This represents an effort by the NSC on Mine Action to link mine action with the broader development discussion. Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung chairs both meetings.

Nearly four decades after the war's end, Vietnamese civilians still are regularly killed and maimed by leftover mines and other explosives. The Government estimates that more than 42,000 people have been killed in such accidents since 1975. According to the 2009 study by the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation and the Ministry of Defense, more than one-third of the land in six central Vietnamese provinces remains impacted by landmines and unexploded bombs.

The problem of unexploded bombs continues to constrain Vietnam’s economic development and the wellbeing of people in the contaminated communes. The World Bank’s 2011 World Development Report, entitled “Conflict, Security & Development”, highlighted that conflict is a real inhibitor of development that, can take many decades to address, as Vietnam’s case demonstrates.

Vietnam has devoted substantial resources to deal with the landmine and unexploded ordnance contamination.

In clearance operations alone, the Government invested US\$89 million in 2009, rising to about \$100 million in 2010, and this is likely to increase in the coming years. The priority areas are those related to economic development: transport routes, resettlement programs, agricultural land, sites for the new factories and export zones, etc.

Ted Paterson from the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining said that “Vietnam's efforts in dealing with its UXO problem have been very impressive. Its National Mine Action Programme is, on many measures, the largest in the world. The country provides a model for other post-conflict countries, but there are also real opportunities for Vietnam to learn from successful innovations in other parts of the world.”

The governments of the United State, Japan, Norway, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Germany are among the key partners working with Vietnam to clean up landmines and unexploded bombs, and to provide victim assistance.

U.S. Ambassador David Shear said that "The goal of U.S. support for mine action in Vietnam is clear - to enable a brighter future for Vietnam and its people."

“The remarkable economic growth in Viet Nam over the past 20 years, and the success in already achieving many of the Millennium Development Goals, has been widely acknowledged. Yet, with Viet Nam now a middle income country, it is increasingly important to also focus on the quality of growth, rather than just GDP growth. From a human development perspective, this means making sure that growth translates into better quality education and healthcare for all Vietnamese.

For Vietnam and its international development partners, this can also mean integration of war legacy assistance into Vietnam’s overall socio-economic development plan ensure that the war legacy issues are addressed in the mainstream development forum,” said Thao Nguyen, the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation’s country director.

Director of Vietnam Mine and Bomb Action Center (VBMAC) Mr Nguyen Trong Canh said, “The Government’s new Mine Action Program has provisions for clearance, risk education and victim assistance, and we are building closer links with donor countries and other countries affected by explosives contamination to learn from each other how best to solve the problem of explosives contamination.”

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