

# demining debate: landmines in southern africa

## SADC Demining Operators Meeting: Grasping the nettle of regional mine action at last?

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Regional humanitarian mine action received a welcome boost in the last week of June when the long-awaited Southern African Development Community (SADC) regional demining operators meeting took place in Luanda, Angola from 26–28 June. This was the first regional demining operators meeting of its kind under the SADC umbrella. The meeting was hosted by the Angolan government, under the auspices of the Mine Action Programme of the SADC Secretariat and the SADC Mine Action Committee (SMAC). It coincided with the first SMAC meeting of 2002. The SMAC normally meets at least bi-annually to discuss landmines related concerns, policies and developments in the region.

The meeting was well attended by humanitarian and commercial demining operators, mine action NGOs, and representatives from various national mine action centres (MACs) throughout the region. It included representatives

from Angola, Namibia, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The meeting coincided with Angola's

ratification of the Ottawa Convention representing an important first step in creating a landmine free zone in Southern Africa. Every member state in SADC has now acceded to the convention without exception.

Whereas the SMAC continued with their own programme, the regional operators and humanitarian agencies sub-divided into three separate working groups to discuss:

- ◆ policy and legislative issues;
- ◆ technology and information issues; and lastly;
- ◆ landmine victims

assistance and resource mobilisation issues.

Each working group came up with a series of recommendations that was submitted to the full conference for discussion and for the SMAC to take to the SADC Council of Ministers.

### SADC and Mine Action

*The Southern African Development Community (SADC) consists of 14 member states, namely Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Of the 14 states 8 are mine-affected, of which Angola, the DRC and Mozambique are the worst-affected. Regular participants in the Mine Action Committee of SADC (SMAC) include Angola, Namibia, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Swaziland, Tanzania and Zambia participated for the first time in the work of the SMAC during the first annual meeting in Luanda from 26 - 28 June 2002. In view of the fact that mine action will in future resort under the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security, the chair country of the OPDS troika would fill the shoes of SMAC from 26 September 2002 - although this is still subject to discussion.*

*The 'Landmines in Southern Africa' research project seeks to identify best practice in the region in terms of all facets of mine action. It investigates the link between development and demining and the impact and response of SADC countries to the introduction of the Mine Ban Convention. Landmines research has been conducted on an ongoing basis at SAIIA since 1997.*



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## ***Workgroup I: Policy and Legislative Issues***

The policy and legislative working group made the following recommendations:

- ◆ All SADC countries should exchange information about the formal national government accreditation processes and policies for demining operators that are in place in their countries of origin.
- ◆ A catalogue should be compiled of the types of demining equipment that have been used in the region with proper background and a full history of the type of projects that they were used for (terrain and purpose), as well as the type of problems or shortcomings experienced.
- ◆ SADC should investigate the possibility of regional safety standards and assist with quality assurance after clearance—either under the SADC umbrella or through national governments.
- ◆ SADC should investigate whether it is possible to provide mine clearance equipment across the region in terms of South-South cooperation above and beyond what national governments provide.
- ◆ The SMAC should do more to sensitise national governments about the special requirements of landmine victims, as the working group agreed that only minimal assistance was being extended to landmine victims. Sensitisation relates to both their training and their reintegration into society and does not only include financial assistance. SADC should therefore also look at ways that national governments could be aided to provide more assistance to landmine victims. SADC governments and the SMAC should also liaise more effectively with international NGOs to assist landmine victims.
- ◆ SADC should have a strong and articulated policy on landmines that provides strategic direction and that allows for the specificities of each individual country. The landmines problem in the region should receive more political attention from SADC leaders.
- ◆ SADC should be more pro-active – it should look at how other regions are providing support at international and national level to mine-affected countries.
- ◆ SADC should insist on more transparency and accountability in national demining

programmes – as well as the introduction of better fund management policies and controls.

- ◆ SADC should investigate the possibility of providing training to financial managers who would be tasked to assist with the financial regulation of demining programmes across the region, thus developing human resource capacity in tandem with national governments.
- ◆ There should also be a follow-up of the middle management training that was done for demining operators in SADC by the Institute of Military Engineering Excellence of Southern Africa (IMEESA) in 2000. The emphasis should be on appropriate training for the region and its circumstances.
- ◆ Lastly, SADC should look at ways of generating more funding locally – the landmine challenge is a long-term problem that requires a strategic and cost-effective approach.

## ***Workgroup II: Technology and Information***

The technology and information workgroup approached their deliberations from the perspective of building confidence in the technical capacities of the region and not only from the perspective of accessing development assistance funding. Two considerations were paramount in terms of how the working group approached their task, namely that of business/commercial considerations and the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of their programmes.

Two proposals were made by the working group to address the above-mentioned concerns:

- ◆ The necessity of developing a regional code of conduct and the creation of a self-regulating regional operators forum or association.
- ◆ The establishment of a SADC regional technical action group that would provide a support function to the SADC Mine Action Committee (SMAC) and that would work within the recognisable structures of SADC.

It is hoped that the establishment of an **operators forum** would create an orderly and beneficial organisation for the region with the purpose:

- ◆ to serve as a single source of affiliation for operators;
- ◆ to establish a regional code of conduct;
- ◆ to arrange regional operators' meetings (for both testing and demonstration purposes);
- ◆ to create a body of knowledge in the form of a regional newsletter;
- ◆ to oversee and co-ordinate training;
- ◆ to engage in client education; and
- ◆ to be entrusted with the power of peer review and sanctions.

The **regional technical action group** would be tasked through the offices of the SADC Secretariat to create a sustainable, technical executive capability for the region. The regional technical action group would have a three-pronged approach:

- ◆ It would be at the frontline in creating centres of excellence (and discussion on how to benefit the region).
- ◆ It would be responsible for the standardisation of humanitarian demining in the region (that would not be below the United Nations standards).
- ◆ It would be responsible for co-ordination and information-sharing on the following issues:
  - Information technology
  - Activities of mine action centres
  - Regional training
  - Technology testing
  - Research and development

### ***Workgroup III: Landmine Victims Assistance and Resource Mobilisation***

The third working group pointed out that coordination between all the agencies (governmental and non-governmental) involved in victim assistance is essential and that there should be no discrimination between defence/military and civil victims. There should be one focal point and co-ordinating body in each country and a comprehensive and integrated approach is necessary. Fundraising should be well planned and co-ordinated – also at a regional level. Victim assistance should include training in hospitals and the development of human resources, both on a national and a regional level. The completion of a landmine impact survey in a country such as Angola is a necessary first step. Quality assurance and accreditation are important and

profit should not be put before people.

### ***Response of SMAC to the Working Group recommendations***

- ◆ The SADC Mine Action Committee (SMAC) proposed that the suggested regional technical action group (proposed by Working Group I) should extend its work beyond its self-defined brief on technical issues. The SMAC requested that it should also integrate the proposals made under the first working group into the brief.
- ◆ The SMAC requested that a Terms of Reference (TOR) stipulating the funding requirements, as well as the brief of the action group should be submitted to the SADC Secretariat for consideration. (Please note box on page 6 for more information on the task team.)
- ◆ The SMAC strongly and positively endorsed the suggestion of a self-regulating Regional Demining Operators Forum that will investigate regional standard-setting and operations.
- ◆ The SMAC indicated that, following the recommendations made in Working Group III regarding the position of landmine victims in the region, it would propose a special, focused meeting on the position of landmines victims in the region to the Ministerial Council.

The proposals made by the three working groups were presented by the SMAC to the SADC Foreign Ministers meeting in July in Mozambique and will be submitted to the SADC Summit in Angola from 26 September - 3 October 2002.

### ***SMAC Discussions***

The SMAC held their first annual meeting in tandem with the operators' meeting and discussed the following main topics that followed from its work agenda:

- ◆ ***Rehabilitation and reintegration of mine victims:*** The SADC would recommend to the Ministerial Council that the policy recommendations that evolved out of the focused Angola workshop in 2000 on the comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration of mine victims should be implemented in member states.

- ◆ **SADC database and mapping:** The SADC database project will link Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Malawi with the regional database that is being established at the National Demining Institute of Mozambique (IND). The project has been set up with funding provided by the EU and 19 database managers from the region have been trained over the last two years. Once it is operational it will be open for access to demining operators via a central website linked to SADC. The database will be comprehensive and will specify the mine-affected areas, current mine awareness programmes, demining operations and the number of landmine victims in each individual country.
- ◆ **Technology:** The technology survey that was done for SADC during 2000 on the region's technology requirements, concluded that the development of a SADC testing site in Gaborone would be desirable. However, the SMAC believes that an evaluation of existing test sites in the region would be a far more cost-effective strategy. A group of technology consultants has been tasked to evaluate existing testing sites in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Namibia. After the evaluation the possibility of a SADC accredited testing site will be investigated – although it seems that national governments may wish to retain national testing sites with the option of including SADC accreditation.
- ◆ **Landmines Treaty:** Compliance with the MBT and article 7 reports were discussed and finalised within SMAC.

The SMAC also adopted a proposal for a special initiative on Angola, to address the plight of landmine victims in the worst-affected country in SADC – namely a workshop linked to the rehabilitation and reintegration of landmine victims.

At this point in time the SMAC is positive that a second SMAC meeting will take place before the end of the year to follow-up on the recommendations that have emanated from the conference in Luanda.

### **Conclusion**

The Luanda meeting was important for three reasons:

- ◆ It managed to refocus attention on the critical landmine challenges facing the region.

- ◆ It allowed demining operators and other humanitarian mine action agencies to provide direct input into the deliberations of the SMAC.
- ◆ It provided an opportunity for regional operators and humanitarian mine action agencies to deliberate jointly from a regional perspective on how donor confidence could be assured in regional mine action programmes, and to exchange information on the specific problems facing individual countries in the region.

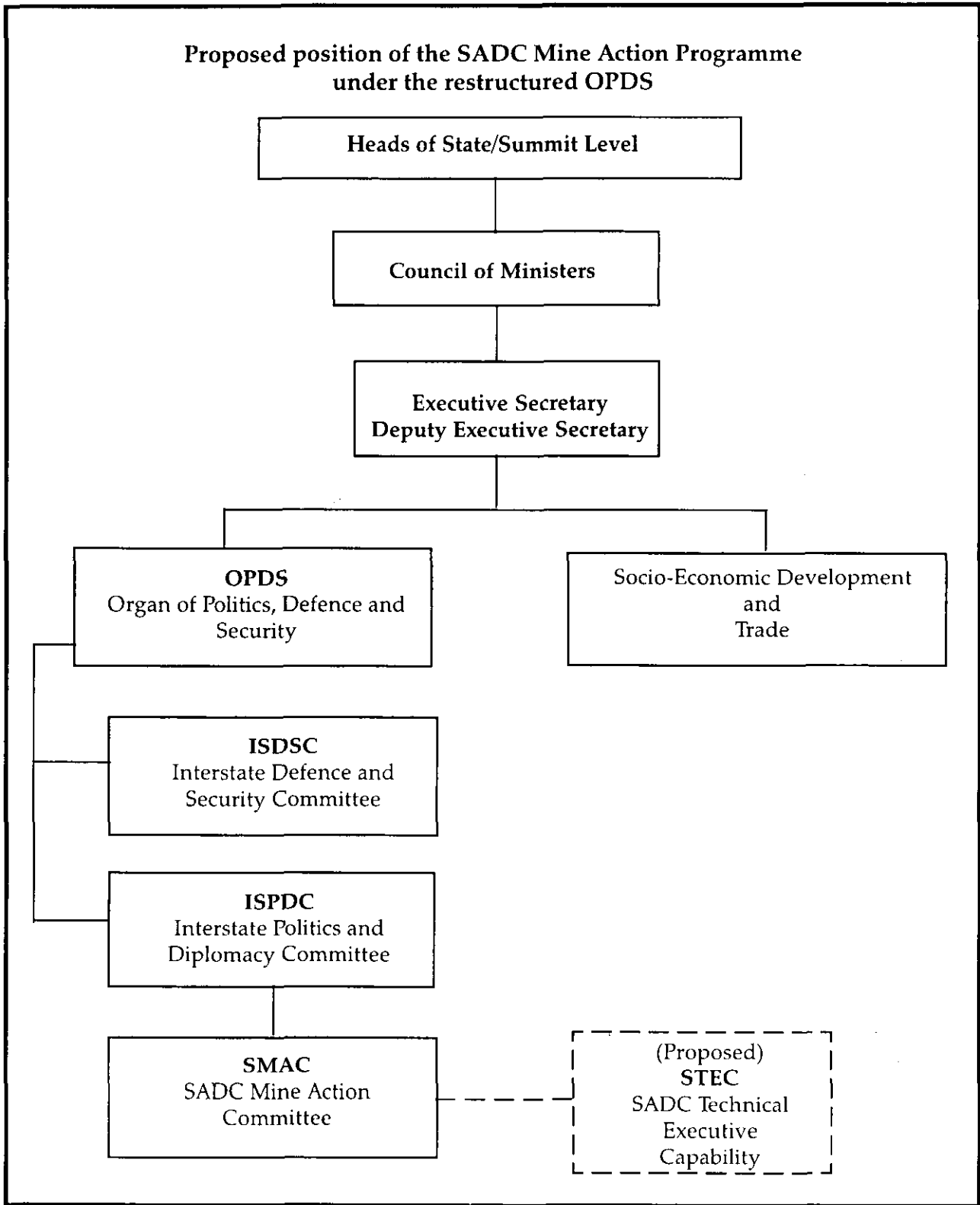
The discussions also reflected a real concern about the current capacity of SADC to deal effectively with mine action on a regional basis. The proposal that provision should be made for a technical executive capability on mine action within the SADC Secretariat is an acknowledgement of the current constraints within the organisation to oversee and comment on technical issues. It was also positive to learn that serious consideration is currently being given within the SADC Secretariat and by SADC governments to expanding the personnel component of the Secretariat. This would allow for a more focused approach to regional mine action.

One of the most important decisions was the general agreement that SADC governments are not doing enough to address the plight of landmine victims and that this should receive more focused attention. However, it is important to deliberate on how a regional policy would be implemented in view of varying budget and socio-economic constraints in different member states.

Certainly one of the most positive recommendations that emanated from the demining operators themselves was the suggestion of a regional self-regulating forum. The regional demining industry has grown enormously over the last 6 – 8 years. It is a recognition of the importance of ensuring that international standards are adhered to and that the regional operators can offer domestic expertise that can benefit the entire region. The forum could assist in ensuring a better exchange of information across the region about the challenges facing mine action in SADC.

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**Proposed position of the SADC Mine Action Programme  
under the restructured OPDS**



**Reorganisation under SADC**

The operationalisation of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security (OPDS) and the comprehensive restructuring of the SADC Secretariat have led to a reconsideration of the place of the SMAC in the new organisational structure of SADC. The SADC Mine Action Programme previously resided under the Directorate for Social and Human Development as part of the special projects related to Small Arms and Weapons; Disaster Management; Landmines and Refugees/IDPs. If the current proposal is accepted it will reside under the Interstate Politics and Diplomacy Committee. (Please note Demining Debate: Landmines in Southern Africa, Issue VII, June 2001 for the previous positioning of the SMAC.)

## A South African Operators Forum/Association

A debriefing session hosted by the South African Department of Foreign Affairs on 23 August 2002 briefed those South African demining operators that did not attend the Luanda conference on the outcomes of the meeting. The proposal of a regional self-regulating forum that is based on individual national forums/associations was endorsed and welcomed by the South African operators.

The advantages of a national, self-regulating forum/association are derived from the following considerations:

- ◆ The forum would represent an important confidence-building mechanism as a recognised national body that represents the South African demining and mine action community.
- ◆ It would play an important role in providing marketing support to the demining community through the establishment of a national newsletter and/or catalogue. It would allow for official participation as a representative body in international trade and investment road shows arranged by the Department of Trade and Industry.
- ◆ It would provide a central nodal point for interaction with the STEC under SADC (see box below) in terms of ensuring that knowledge about tenders and latest developments regarding regional mine action are accessible throughout the mine action community.
- ◆ It would also provide a contact point for government to disseminate equitably information about requests for assistance with mine action programmes throughout the continent.

The suggested Demining Operators Forum/Association would be a purely private sector initiative and would not involve government. The operators present also supported the suggestion that the 'Operators Forum' should be expanded to include all partners in humanitarian mine action – thus it should be broadened to include all interested agencies involved in mine action and should be an inclusive process and body.

The Landmines in Southern Africa programme of the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) and the African Demining Institute (ADI) were tasked to facilitate the process and to draw up terms of reference after consultation with the South African mine action community on the way forward.

### STEC (SADC Executive Technical Capability)

Following the acceptance in Luanda by the SMAC of the proposal that the SADC Mine Action Programme required a regional technical executive capability, a task force visited Gaborone on 4 – 5 July 2002 to discuss:

- ◆ the focus and nature of the STEC;
- ◆ to finalise the TOR; and
- ◆ to determine how the STEC would be integrated into the activities of the SADC Secretariat.

Representatives from Angola, South Africa and Mozambique formed part of the discussions. The TOR was not available at the time of publication.

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### SAIIA Regional Mine Action Conference

The SA Institute of International Affairs is arranging a SADC regional humanitarian mine action conference from 10 - 11 October 2002. The overall theme of the conference is 'Development and Demining: The Missing Link?' The conference will cover all sections of humanitarian mine action in the region, including demining, landmine victims, technology and policy issues. The conference will take place at Jan Smuts House, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Prospective participants and presenters should kindly contact:

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