

Norwegian statement on Article 5 extension requests
Standing Committee on Mine Clearance
June 2011

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Mr Chair

We would like to make some general comments on the extension request process. Let me start by thanking the Co-Chairs for their impressive and competent work on the Article 5 extension requests this year. Your efforts, supported by the ISU, in analysing the first draft requests and your subsequent engagement with the requesting State Parties have helped to secure more coherent and substantive requests for our consideration. We would also like to commend the requesting States Parties for their cooperation in this effort. We do however have some observations regarding the process as such.

Norway, as Co-Rapporteur for the Standing Committee on the General Status and Operation is a member of the Article 5 analysing group, and we have taken part in the meetings of the group this spring. States Parties agreed to a process for reviewing and improving the quality of the Article 5 Extension requests at the 7MSP, five years ago. Based on our experience over the past years we believe it is time that we start to reflect on the rationale and effectiveness of the current process. States Parties have already recognised that this process places a heavy burden on the representatives of those States Parties that are mandated to analyse the requests.

In our view, the most significant contributions to the analysis of this years extension requests have so far come from the Co-Chairs of the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, supported by the ISU and with expert input from the ICBL and the ICRC. The level of engagement in and contributions to the process from other States Parties, ourselves included, has been less than impressive. Attendance at the meetings is patchy and few of those who attend the meetings make substantive comments to the analysis. This is in spite of the excellent expert briefing on mine clearance that the President and the ISU organised for members of the Analysing group in March. As the representative from Switzerland said earlier this afternoon "... we have to reflect on how we can enable the necessary in-depth analysis and discussion of the requests in order to ensure that high quality requests continue to be the norm."

In our view, rather than spending our scarce resources on continued efforts to increase the level of engagement from all States Parties currently in the Analysing Group to this process, we believe it would serve the overall purpose better to modify the process. We would argue for a process where the Co-chairs make more use of external expert advice, from for instance mine clearance operators, while retaining the substantial inputs from the ICBL and ICRC, and rely less on the active involvement by other States Parties.

We also believe that the process could benefit from looking critically at the documents that are the foundations for the analysing process. In our experience the documents presented to the states parties tasked to analyse the requests contain so much detailed information that it is difficult to identify the key data relevant for this kind of analysis, including answers to simple but crucial questions such as:

- what is the actual size of the remaining challenge,
- what resources are needed and available to address this challenge,
- what is the projected annual rate of production until the end of the requested extension period and
- will the most efficient methods be employed.

We need to ensure that the Article 5 extension request process remains relevant to its intended purpose in the years to come. Hence we should look critically at both the expectations to the documents that constitute the foundation for the analysis and at the process for analysing them prior to presentations in the plenary sessions.

We could aim to test new approaches already next year - and if deemed productive - a formal change could if necessary be made at the third review conference in 2014.

Our main concern should be to secure relevant and high-quality extension requests and identify the most efficient method to achieve the national plans for completion that are developed, and not to create even more meetings for us. We look forward to discussing the possibility of modifying and improving the extension request process in the coming months.

Thank you