

ICRC intervention

States Parties that have been granted extensions on deadlines for implementing Article 5

Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Mine Action Technologies 21 - 23 May 2012

The ICRC notes the reports by **Denmark** and **Uganda** that both are still striving to meet their clearance deadlines of 1 July and 1 August respectively. We recognise the specific challenges each State has described and understand that they will take all possible steps to reach their targets. We also thank them for their transparency and significant efforts to date to free their countries of anti-personnel mines. The ICRC urges these States, if they need more time, to make this clear and to submit a request for a new timeframe. It is not healthy for the Convention to allow clearance deadlines to pass if ambiguities remain concerning the fulfilment of Article 5 obligations.

It is regrettable that there is not yet an extension request from the **Republic of Congo**, which was due on 31 March according to the procedure established by the States Parties. The ICRC extends its sympathy to the Congo in regards to the explosion of a munitions stockpile in Brazzaville in March. The ICRC has provided clearance and other assistance in response to this tragedy. Although we understand this emergency has contributed to the delay in the submission of the extension request, it is nonetheless unfortunate that there is no representation from the Congo here today, which would have permitted a direct report. We urge any state or organisation here today with contacts in the Congo to encourage it to submit its extension request as a matter of urgency.

We welcome the update from **Venezuela** but regret the slow pace of clearance to date. It is good to hear that Venezuela nonetheless will achieve completion once and for all in 2013.

We also welcome **Thailand's** commitment to meet its extended deadline despite delays and relatively slow progress to date. In particular, we welcome Thailand's plans to make use of all land release methods to help it achieve its goals. The ICRC also commends both TMAC and CMAC in **Cambodia** for their efforts to cooperate on border clearance despite the lack of final border delineation. The ICRC supports Thailand's call for other States with border issues to cooperate with their neighbours for the benefit of the populations in these areas.

We take this opportunity to remind all States Parties with Article 5 obligations that the non-clearance of border areas or around military bases can also constitute use of anti-personnel mines. The ICRC therefore urges all states to fulfil their commitments under point 18 of the Cartagena Action Plan to allow access to border areas for humanitarian demining, even if access may be difficult or contested. We also encourage States that have to make difficult choices with limited resources to prioritise mine clearance on their territory according to the humanitarian need. One indicator of this impact, for example, would be the relative number of casualties in a given area relative to that in other areas on a State's territory. In this regard, we recall the timely reminder by President Prak Sokhonn at the 11th Meeting of States Parties that regardless of the circumstances States Parties "cannot default on [their] obligations".

With regards to the presentation by the **United Kingdom**, we are pleased to have heard that the land release programme in the Falklands / Malvinas Islands has permitted the release of 17% of the land restricted to the community. We also welcome the UK's statement that lessons have been learned that will assist it in its future clearance operations. We hope that the UK will now be in a position to submit a detailed clearance plan, which was due on 30 June 2010 – now almost two years ago – according to the decision of the 9th MSP. We urge the UK to submit this plan at the 12th MSP, if not before.

In addition, we understand that there are still 113 mined areas in the Falklands / Malvinas Islands. So, only 4 areas have been cleared since 1999. If only 4 areas have been cleared in 3 years, it is important for the UK to report if it is still on track to clear the remaining 113 areas in the next 9 years. If not, we encourage it to provide an explanation as to why it is unable to meet its commitments and how it intends to rectify this situation.