

Updates on Article 5 requests submitted in 2012

H.E. Prak Sokhonn, President of the Eleventh Meeting of the States Parties

Standing Committee on Mine Clearance

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At the September 2006 7MSP, the States Parties agreed to a process for the preparation, submission and consideration of requests for extensions of Article 5 deadlines.

The decisions taken included that States Parties seeking Article 5 extensions were encouraged to submit their requests to the President no less than nine months before the Meeting of the States Parties or Review Conference at which their requests would be considered, and, that the President, upon receipt of requests, should inform the States Parties and make these requests openly available in keeping with the Convention's practice of transparency.

In line with the decisions of the 7MSP, I wrote to the States Parties on May 3rd to inform them that the following requests had been received by that date:

- Afghanistan, received March 29th
- Angola, received on March 30th
- Zimbabwe, also received on March 30th, and
- Cyprus, received on April 30th.

In keeping with our traditional practice, I asked that these requests be made available on the Convention's web site.

With a view to streamlining our work, I invited expert input on the requests that had been submitted prior to 30 April.

I did so, in consultation with the Mine Clearance Co-Chairs, to ensure that, prior to the analysing group's first meeting, the group would have in front of it views and information that may help us with our task.

I sent to eleven expert organizations the analysis template used by the group since 2008 along with the invitation to provide input on the requests submitted by Afghanistan, Angola and Zimbabwe.

These eleven expert organizations are as follows:

APOPO
DanChurchAid
Danish Demining Group
Handicap International
HALO Trust
GICHD
ICBL
ICRC
Mines Advisory Group
Norwegian People's Aid, and
The Swiss Foundation for Mine Action

These organizations were selected on the understanding that they are the world's leading not-for-profit organisations with demining expertise, which both have widespread international experience and are active in and knowledgeable about the work of the Convention.

I should note that the request submitted by Cyprus was received after the President had already sent his letter to the expert organizations.

Of the organizations that were invited to provide input, the following did so with respect to some or all of the requests:

DanChurchAid
Danish Demining Group
HALO Trust
GICHD
ICBL and
Norwegian People's Aid.

In addition, the ICRC indicated that it intends to comment on some requests once it first shares its comments bilaterally with the States concerned before sharing them with the analysing group, as is the ICRC's standing practice.

On May 16th, the analysing group met for the first time this year to begin its work.

Analysing group members expressed appreciation at this meeting for the expert input that had been provided.

This week, in keeping with past practice, we have invited representatives of the requesting States Parties to join the analysing group for informal question and answer sessions.

Our next step will be to establish what additional clarifications we may require from requesting States and what additional expertise we may need to assist us in ultimately producing analyses of the requests.

Should this process result in States Parties submitting revised requests, as has occurred in previous years, I will inform all delegations and ensure that these requests are made available on the Convention's website.

The analysing group will meet as necessary in order to conclude our work by mid to late September.

I would highlight as well that on March 30th the ISU led a half-day briefing for the analysing group to ensure that we had the background we needed on Article 5 and the Article 5 extensions process.

Analysing group members attending this briefing benefitted greatly from this briefing and the analysing group is now better equipped in terms of our knowledge of this process and the agreed working methods.

Finally, let me thank the requesting States Parties for their efforts in preparing their requests.

As a State Party that has gone through this process, Cambodia knows that for some the process of preparing a request can take a year or more and we are grateful for the commitment of the requesting States Parties to the ultimate fulfilment of their Article 5 obligations.

Thank you.