

**ICRC Statement
Afghanistan's Extension Request**

**Standing Committee on Mine Clearance,
Mine Risk Education and Mine Action Technologies**

22 May 2012

Anti-personnel mines were massively used in Afghanistan for decades. The International Committee of the Red Cross takes this opportunity to acknowledge the great efforts made to date by both the Afghan authorities and the international community to free Afghanistan from anti-personnel mines. These efforts have been made in the face of daunting challenges, including ongoing insecurity and new weapons contamination. Unfortunately, these factors have ensured that Afghanistan remains one of the most mine-affected countries in the world today.

We wish to congratulate Afghanistan for submitting a very detailed and impressive Extension Request. We also welcome the commitment to national ownership demonstrated in the plan for transition of coordination to the Afghan government. We hope that adequate means are in place and that political support has been obtained so that the transition will not have an impact on the timely implementation of the clearance plan.

The ICRC supports Afghanistan's Extension Request for a ten-year extension period. However, given the number of risk factors, including the uncertainty of future funding and the unpredictable security situation, we believe there may be a need for the clearance plan and budget to be updated in the coming years. We would therefore suggest that in addition to the submission of regular reports on progress made in meeting the annual clearance targets, Afghanistan should be asked to submit a revised clearance plan and budget by mid-2015, once the national survey is complete. At this time, a more precise estimate of the remaining contamination should be possible and updated information on funding commitments and/or fundraising initiatives should also be available. Any other developments, for instance in terms of the evolving security situation, could also be taken into account at that time.

We would also urge further clarification of how demining and ERW clearance support to infrastructure and development projects listed in the Extension Request might affect the clearance plan, which is determined according to humanitarian criteria, namely the number of casualties occurring in a particular area relative to another area. It would be important to have more information on how Afghanistan plans to balance these "competing priorities" as it implements its national plan over the ten year extension period.