

ICBL Statement on Trust Funds
Mine Ban Treaty Standing Committee on Resources, Cooperation and Assistance.
25 May 2012



Thank you Mme Chair.

Mine action globally receives a substantial amount of funding. Donors and affected states contributed approximately 637 million US dollars in international and national support for mine action in 2010, similar to the total recorded contribution in 2009. Our research so far indicates that 2011 level of global funding will be at about the same levels as 2009 and 2010.

We believe that concerted efforts from donors and affected states can help improve how this money is expended. We welcome the creation of this Standing Committee in order to discuss this issue, and particularly the good informal session yesterday. We would also like to thank the co-chairs, Albania and Thailand for their efforts to follow up on ideas proposed in this forum last year.

We agree with the remarks made earlier by the ICRC, and supported by the United Nations, Belgium and Canada regarding being cautious when considering the establishment and use of a new platform for partnership.

Coming to the subject of this session, the ICBL has taken an interest over the past years in the issue of trust funds in terms of its impact on states' ability to efficiently implement the Mine Ban Treaty. We have heard in numerous cases complaints by mine-affected states that administrative delays have slowed the arrival of promised funds, preventing them from carrying out the work they pledged to do under the treaty. From our operator members, we have also heard that such delays cause gaps in funding, which means that they sometimes have to lay off personnel or even close down operations temporarily.

The ISU's paper also outlines a number of other challenges involved with existing trust funds, including the small number of states that these large pools of money are currently shared among. Then again, we are not convinced that creating a new trust fund just for the convention would solve such problems.

The only possible benefit of a new Trust Fund – either at the national or international level - would be if it can be expected to generate new support to mine affected states. But given the stagnation in funding in recent years, is this realistic? Even at the national level, new trust funds also may just add another layer of administration when such support existed already or would have extended anyway because of bilateral relationships and priorities that exist between the donor and affected states. What is certain is that, as outlined in the paper, any new trust funds will take additional time and substantial resources to create and maintain, which needs to be balanced with any benefit that may result.

So we would agree with the ISU paper's apparent conclusion that it might be more effective to try to improve the current trust funds and/or encourage direct bilateral assistance rather than create something new. As the ISU paper says, it is up to States Parties to work with those funds to encourage needed changes, such as to ensure the funding goes to a larger pool of states and arrives in a more timely manner. In the case of the UN VTF, there seems to be an opportunity now to continue the reflections and improvements that have already begun last year. We hope that the voices of all stakeholders will continue to be heard so that these positive developments can continue. We also hope the ITF does not dilute the strong impact it has had over the years with its new, broader mandate. Again, as the paper says, it is up to States Parties to use their influence over these bodies to enhance their full potential for the treaty and *all* states in need.

When considering such improvements we would like to emphasize the following principles.

1. Any multilateral channels for donation should ensure funding is administered and transferred to implementing partners in a timely manner.
2. Donors need to set limits for maximum turnaround time, as waiting for months for funds means that work cannot get done, and that is neither efficient nor effective
3. Donors should set a maximum percentage that can be used for administration, thus ensuring that the maximum amount of funds possible is spent for actual implementation.
4. Transparent reporting on how funds are allocated and spent should be provided by multilateral mechanisms.
5. Regular external evaluations of the mechanisms should be conducted and published.

Finally, we believe that using multilateral funding channels should allow more flexibility. In particular, we believe they could be more efficient if they were used without earmarking of funds, so that the fund can allocate resources based on affected states' needs and priorities. Donors need to insist, however, that there are transparent procedures in place on how allocation of funds to different mine affected countries takes place. When donors want to allocate the funds for a specific country and /or operator, bilateral channels are usually a better and a more efficient option.

Thank you.