

## Germany

Intersessional Standing Committee Meetings,  
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Geneva

### Cooperation and assistance in clearing mined areas

Mr. Co-Chair,

thank you for giving Germany the floor again, this time under the agenda item cooperation and assistance.

We do share the firm conviction by many States Parties that as of today the Ottawa Convention is a remarkable and unique achievement not only in international disarmament but also in humanitarian and development cooperation. The Convention has become a matchless success story since it opened for signature a decade ago.

Over the last 20 years mine action has gained an increasing level of professionalism with remarkable achievements among which the following should be highlighted:

1. The use of new anti-personnel landmines has largely come to an end,
2. Large tracks of land formerly contaminated with landmines have been returned to communities,
3. The number of landmine victims has steadily decreased,
4. Armed forces of States Parties have destroyed their landmine stockpiles or are in the process of doing so and  
last but not least,
5. Trade in AP landmines has ended, and thereby too has ended the possibility of new minefields being laid.

During the course of this meeting we have reaffirmed that only a fraction of areas suspected of landmine contamination are in fact affected, making the burden of mined areas a more manageable task. Improved survey methodology and more effective priority setting have made it possible for operators to better target those areas which cause the greatest harm to affected communities. Technical skills and an increasing knowledge base on how to best tackle the demining challenge have been developed over the years. This technology allows for IMAS compliant clearance operations to take place. Indeed a number of countries such as Yemen have benefited from the knowledge gained in their own operations.

Since 1992, Germany has contributed some 150 Mio. Euro to Mine Action Programmes

world-wide. In 2008 alone, our contribution will amount to up to 17,5 Mio Euros. The most favoured region is Asia followed by Africa and the Balkans.

While the progress made is clear, we also have heard in various interventions during the last days that much more could have been achieved if obligations under article 5 would have been taken up with more determination from the entry into force of the Convention. Undoubtedly, the responsibility for mine action efforts primarily lies with the mine affected countries. Donors or third parties can assist in and contribute to efforts undertaken by the mine affected states but cannot replace their responsibilities.

On Wednesday we have heard criticism by Civil Society representatives concerning the requests for extensions under Art. 5, and we are grateful for their valuable input to the analysis process. According to their assessment some of the requests for extensions under Art. 5 have become necessary due to questionable delays in starting demining operations. This could be interpreted as if States Parties have not really been willing to live up to their commitments under the Convention.

In order to safeguard the outstanding reputation of this international agreement, the credibility of its central provisions and its cooperative spirit we must ensure that all countries undertake concerted efforts to fulfil all their obligations under the Convention within the minimum time span necessary. This is the perspective under which we will approach these Art. 5 extension requests.

Germany is and will stay committed to mine action and calls on all parties ~~in a position to do so~~ to contribute to our common goal of a world free from the impact of anti-personnel landmines.

Thank you.