

Meeting of the Standing Committees  
Standing Committee on Mine Clearance,  
Mine Risk Education and Mine Action Technologies  
Intervention by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad, Norway  
2-6<sup>th</sup> June 2008, Geneva

Co-Chairs,

The Mine Ban Convention has entered what is perhaps its most important and interesting phase since its adoption ten years ago. The first deadlines for meeting obligations under Article V are coming up in less than a year, and this is followed by the Second Review Conference. The next year and a half will give us the opportunity to demonstrate the success of the Convention, and the value of a model where states, non-governmental organisations and international organisations work together sharing a common humanitarian objective. It is also an opportunity to discuss the way forward for our Convention; How to best achieve a mine-free world and empowerment of and decent lives for mine survivors.

When planning the way forward, we should take into account the considerable impact that the Mine Ban Convention has already had on people's lives and their socio-economic situation. The impact goes beyond the treaty itself. The Convention has also strongly influenced multilateral work in both the humanitarian and the disarmament field. The remarkable partnership that led to the Mine Ban Convention, the partnership between affected countries and other states; between states, civil society and international organisations, has been taken further in negotiating other agreements and conventions. This experience should be drawn on also in the future implementation efforts of the MBC. The work we do in the Mine Ban Convention therefore sets an important precedent. This is yet another reason to remain focused, work hard, and ensure the continued credibility of our Convention. The Convention on Cluster Munitions adopted in Dublin last week builds on the MBCs and the experience gained through its implementation.

As for mine clearance, several States Parties have already completed their mine clearance obligations, and we congratulate them. Other States Parties have submitted extension requests regarding their article V obligations. The development of such requests has been a demanding job for the relevant national authorities and it is a considerable workload for the President together with the Co-Chairs and Co-Rapporteurs of the Standing Committees. This work will create precedence in how extension requests will be made and handled in the future and is important for the credibility of the Convention. We commend the analysing group for making use of available expertise, for instance from the ICBL, the ICRC and the UNDP, who all have important contributions to make in order to understand the situation in different countries and ensure a good process. We wish you the best of luck in taking this process forward to the 9MSP which will make decisions on this first round of extension requests.

As Norway has emphasised before on several occasions, the extension request process should be viewed not as an additional burden on States Parties, but as an opportunity to take stock, to improve planning, to mobilise national and international resources, and to accelerate implementation of the Article's provisions. However, it is essential that the legal provisions as well as the agreed process is respected by all. We should remind ourselves that the very first requirement for an extension request, paragraph 4a) in Article 5, is that the request contains the duration of the proposed extension.)

I would (also) like to underline that donors have a continued obligation to assist mine-affected States Parties in fulfilling their Article 5 obligations. Donor states parties should meet the new momentum created by the extension requests with clear signals concerning continued funding of mine action. More clarity regarding future donor funding will be pursued by Norway as the coordinator of the Resource Utilisation Contact Group.

However, available resources are limited, and international assistance is provided in different ways now than before. It is not necessarily less money going from donor countries to recipient countries; on the contrary, development assistance is increasing. But funding modalities are changing, with more budget support and sector support and less earmarked funding. This implies that the final decisions on how to use funding is to a much greater extent left to the authorities of the recipient countries. This demands new thinking by national authorities and advocacy groups on how to ensure sufficient funding for mine clearance. It is therefore more than ever essential to ensure that resources are spent in the most effective and efficient way, to contribute to the rapid fulfilment of Article 5 obligations. In our discussions on the cost-effectiveness of mine clearance methods, the issue of land release through non-technical means has come up as one additional means of achieving implementation of Article 5, as we discussed yesterday and today.

As the coordinator for the Resource Utilisation Contact Group, we have prepared a draft concept note on land release to be presented at the 9MSP, found as Document 5A in your document package. It is entitled “Applying all available methods to achieve the full, efficient and expedient implementation of Article 5”. In preparing this document, we have consulted a variety of stakeholders and experts, most recently in a workshop here in Geneva two weeks ago, that my colleague referred to in yesterday’s session on land release. To continue these consultations, we would like to repeat our invitation to the RUCG lunch meeting today for a more in-depth discussion on the draft concept paper. There will also be a presentation of a paper on land release and liability issues prepared by the ISU.

Co-Chair,

It is essential to integrate a gender perspective when discussing mine clearance. Women and men, girls and boys use their land and environment in different ways, and different methods of mine clearance and land release will affect them differently. Mine risk education must be conducted in an age-appropriate and gender-sensitive manner. Men and women also possess different kinds of information that can give complementary information about where there is a real mine threat and where land can be released. In addition, mine clearance can be an important means of income for both men and women.

Finally, it is extremely important that we recognise that challenges in mine clearance continue to exist. Land release by non-technical methods does not make real mines disappear. A broad and flexible approach to land release is a means to ensure that we use available resources where the problem is, and not to clear land where there are no mines. There are still thousands of mines in the field that have to be cleared by the same old detailed, laborious, time-consuming, expensive and dangerous methods. Continued cooperation and assistance will be essential. Mine clearance remains a common challenge for all State Parties to the Convention.

Thank you

