

Standing Committee on Mine Clearance - SWITZERLAND

Mr. Co-chair

Thank you very much for the opportunity to comment on the agenda items under consideration. We would like to congratulate you for the excellent preparation for and leadership during this standing committee.

Mine clearance is a key obligation of the Anti-Personnel Landmine Convention, and is one of the key elements in the process towards a world without anti-personnel mines.

Switzerland has therefore maintained its firm commitment in this regard, in line with its 2008-2011 Mine action strategy. It contributed again about 16 Mio CHF in total in 2009 to mine action in general, and contributed financial means as well as in-kind contributions of roughly 3 million Swiss Francs particularly on clearance projects. Furthermore, Switzerland continued to fund the Geneva Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) as a centre of expertise also for clearance with roughly 8.8 million Swiss Francs last year.

The integration of mine clearance in particular and mine action in general into development cooperation and peace building can have positive effects. Such an integration can ensure more coherent action and a holistic view on mine action, while it could also help to ensure the necessary financial resources. This is why Switzerland has defined the integration of mine action into development as a strategic goal for its activities, and principally embeds its mine clearance activities into broader development cooperation projects in affected countries.

Mr. Co-Chair

My delegation would like to thank States Parties with Art. 5 extension requests for their detailed updates on the current status of implementation, and particularly commends Nicaragua for its success in clearing all mined areas. Switzerland is aware of the difficulties States Parties are facing in fulfilling the requirements of the Convention. In Switzerland's consistent view, however, the extension of the clearance deadline should only be granted in exceptional cases.

Our discussion of current and future extension requests have provided us with some lessons learned:

- In our view, the last two years have shown us the responsibilities that come along with a granted extension: It is one the one hand the responsibility of the States Parties to grant an extension with a realistic

time frame. On the other hand, it is the responsibility of the requesting State to comply with the obligations that come along with the extension: It is Switzerland's view that this includes not having new delays already two years after being granted an extension, neither running out of resources in an early phase of the extension. We also believe that the State Party stands in the responsibility to fully comply with the intermediate obligations and milestones agreed in the framework of a short-term extension.

- In our view, therefore, a step-by-step approach with intermediate short-term extensions calling for specific milestones in the clearance process seems to us to be a very promising method. It facilitates the constant exchange between the State Party concerned and supporting States Parties, and assists the State Party concerned in keeping the momentum of the implementation of its obligations.
- **Co-operation** focusing on the exchange of experiences among countries, who are in the article 5 process or cooperation between those who have recently fulfilled their obligations under article 5 and those who still have challenges to come is another promising approach. Particularly cooperation among different actors in the same regions could facilitate the progress on article 5 obligations.
- Presentations have also shown how important the balance between international cooperation and national ownership is: a stable funding and provision of technical assistance by donors is indeed very important, and can be decisive whether clearance can be completed or not. Simultaneously, however, donor support alone will not clear mines, if there is no national ownership and commitment on the political level.
- From a donors perspective, Switzerland welcomes the presentation of detailed and precise information on progress made, remaining challenges and on future plans and deadlines. Such information allows donors to better allocate their resources and to have clearer views for cooperation and assistance in the next few years.

Mr. Co-Chair

The credibility of the Convention depends among inter alia on the way article 5 is honoured, and recently also how the possibility of an extension request is used. States Parties' commitment and respect for the deadlines in full co-operation and transparency is crucial.

Thank you, Mr. Co-Chair