

Meeting of the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Mine Action Technologies
28 May 2009

Statement by Norway on Cooperation and Assistance

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Thank you.

I would like to start by reiterating a few basic principles related to Article 6 of the Mine Ban Convention on International Cooperation and Assistance. Let me quote the first part of Article 6.4: "Each State Party in a position to do so shall provide assistance for mine clearance and related activities." It is, in other words, a treaty obligation to assist for States Parties "in a position to do so". Furthermore, all States Parties have a shared legal obligation to *cooperate* and assist, and there are many examples of mine-affected States Parties assisting each other.

Article 6 gives "partnership" substantive meaning. The Mine Ban Convention came about because of a constructive and real partnership between mine-affected and other states as well as between states and civil society. Article 6 is strategic and operational at the same time.

Each State Party has an individual legal responsibility to comply with all the obligations in the Convention. It is therefore paramount that each State Party fully assumes this responsibility. No-one but a state itself can ensure this, and no-one is better placed than a state itself to determine how to ensure this. National ownership is the key to successful implementation of the Convention. However, in many cases, challenges are great and cooperation with other actors including donors is necessary. Cooperation and assistance remains an essential tool for the implementation of the Mine Ban Convention.

How can we cooperate and assist each other? It is done by being principled and pragmatic at the same time. Legal obligations must be honoured – and there are many ways to achieve this. There is not one single way forward but many. We must continue our consultations on this and similar issues on how best to make use of all available resources for mine action, and how we can avoid traps like mine action being "mainstreamed away", to use one example. On the other hand, it is essential to apply new understanding such as the importance of applying a gender perspective even in mine action, traditionally seen as a gender-neutral activity. The Swiss Campaign to Ban Landmines has shown how the lack of understanding of the different experiences and values ascribed to men and women, boys and girls makes mine action less effective, including surveys, clearance, mine risk education and victim assistance.

We are now in a position where we have the best information ever for many States Parties regarding mine clearance. States Parties who have submitted extension requests have gone through rigorous processes with a view to complying with Article 5 as soon as possible.

This should be supported. Supporting the UNDP “completion initiative” is one way of doing this. Another approach is to look at lessons learned in mine clearance and make more use of new ways of working, for instance non-technical surveys for land release. And we should not, of course, forget to commend the mine-affected countries who commit scarce resources to complying with the Convention.

In the current financial climate, resources for mine action will be harder to find. Too many resources have been wasted on projects that have produced little if any progress in terms of locating the mined areas and clearing them. The focus now must be on utilising and improving methods that work and that can be sustained over time also when cooperation and assistance parameters change. This is a responsibility that both affected States Parties and States Parties in a position to provide assistance must assume with equal urgency

Norway is a donor country, and we see that multi-year funding provides partner countries and organisations with increased predictability and better planning tools. We do not deny that this is a challenge when funding comes from our humanitarian budget. In Norway’s new humanitarian policy we focus on how to maintain both flexibility and predictability at the same time. One of our strategies will be to consider multi-year cooperation agreements with selected partners to provide more predictable financing for priority humanitarian areas in cases where these partners have comparative advantages.

Norway’s political and other support to mine action is based on the provisions of the Mine Ban Convention and the needs of affected communities and victims. Fulfilling Article 5 obligations on mine clearance is indeed challenging and will take a long time for many States Parties, but obligations on victim assistance will continue throughout the full lifecycles of the survivors.

We will maintain a high level of assistance, and continue to work on and develop partnership initiatives. 10 years after the Convention entered into force, cooperation and assistance is still needed. There is no reason to think otherwise.

Thank you.