

It is positive that despite a lack of international assistance in the past two years, Zimbabwe was able to conduct analysis in order to sharply reduce the amount of suspected areas, which brings it closer to a more reliable picture of the remaining contamination. Given the current lack of equipment for deminers, it may make more sense for Zimbabwe to continue to focus mostly on survey in this extension period, which would mean reducing the large number of deminers and moving them to survey work.¹ The request does indicate that a limited amount of survey tasks will take place, but that they should only take two months to carry out.² The request also states that Zimbabwe intends to reduce by up to 50% the remaining suspected hazardous areas through further survey, which will require significantly more survey capacity.³ Without the information gained through additional survey, Zimbabwe's cost estimate of USD 100 million for clearing all mined areas seems premature.

Overall, the ICBL believes that States Parties should grant Zimbabwe another extension of 24 months. Zimbabwe's decision to request only short extensions seems the best approach given the uncertainty of its situation relative to the international community. Periodic, short-term assessments of Zimbabwe's capacity keep the spotlight on the problems it faces and maintain pressure on the international community to provide needed assistance as well as on the government of Zimbabwe to find ways to mobilize such support.

At the same time, Zimbabwe should use this time to pursue more energetically different avenues for international assistance, including by listing mine action as a priority in strategic documents related to development and connecting clearance with available humanitarian assistance. It should also focus more in this extension period on activities it may be able to carry out without significant new resources, such as increased survey to gain a more precise estimate of the remaining contamination, changing the status of ZMAC to a civilian organization, and ensuring its national demining standards are IMAS compliant. All of these may help open doors for increased international support. The ICBL also encourages Zimbabwe to continue its own national contributions to enable clearance and survey to continue.

In addition, in granting Zimbabwe a second extension, States Parties also need to consider how they can provide funds, equipment and technical support needed to carry out the activities planned for this period. Not only because such assistance is a requirement under Article 6, but also because when endorsing the plans submitted with the request, it is logical that States Parties provide the necessary support to enable Zimbabwe to carry out the planned activities, and we urge them to do so.

¹ The request states that its mine clearance squadron has 140 deminers but only 24 working metal detectors and limited personal protective equipment. See Zimbabwe's Article 5 deadline extension request, July 2010, p. 21.

² Ibid, p. 17.

³ Ibid, p. 20-21.

