

NORWAY

CHRISTIAN RUGE

Mine clearance  
Statement by Norway

Thank you Mr. President

With the adoption of the Cartagena Action Plan last year we committed ourselves to ensure the expeditious identification of all mined areas and to ensure the clearance and release of these areas as soon as possible. In addition to fulfilling the legal obligation of clearance as soon as possible, the speed and manner of mine clearance will have crucial implications for development and human security - the safety and well-being of affected individuals and their communities.

Therefore we must focus all our efforts to ensure that adequate mine clearance programs are in place in all mine-affected areas, and that these make use of the most effective and efficient methods and following relevant international mine action standards.

We are on the right track in these efforts. Landmine Monitor reports that never before have so large mined areas been cleared as in 2009, and they indicate that the actually area probably is larger due to underreporting. The presentations we have heard yesterday and today demonstrate that national authorities have significantly improved their approach to the planning and execution of land release and clearance operations, reflecting the industry's enhanced understanding of the mine problem and how to address it in a safe and cost-effective manner.

Furthermore, while it is regrettably that we still lack a reliable global overview of the extent of mined mine area, we have never before had a clearer picture of the remaining global challenge towards a mine free world. Improved performance by all actors in the mine clearance sector; States, the UN and the NGOs have contributed to this. Our responsibility as states parties is to our utmost to support and continue to promote increased improvement in all sections of the value chain, so mine clearance continue to become faster, safer and cheaper. This includes actions to ensure that the resources invested are spent so they yield even more cleared areas, and to reduce as much as possible unnecessary coordination structures and procedures that hampers rather than facilitates mine clearance.

We share the concerns voiced by the ICBL that even if clearance have improved remarkably, progress within many of the mine affected states parties is too slow. As a result we may face a situation where states parties again seek extensions to their article 5 deadline, thus failing to meet their obligations to clear all mined areas as soon as possible. We believe that national ownership backed by strong domestic political commitments to implement the obligations, supported by competent UN and NGO mine action agencies, will be the key to avoid such a situation. Such partnerships will also undoubtedly assist resource mobilization.

The Cartagena action plan we adopted last year lays out the concrete steps all states parties need to take to avoid unnecessary delays in clearance. It has been encouraging to

see that states parties with article 5 obligations frame their plans in relation to the relevant actions in the Cartagena Plan. However, we need to be sure that the plans translate into real action on the ground so that clearance can be accelerated. It is also important that the states parties who have been granted extensions to the Article 5 deadline, implement the relevant aspects of the extensions decisions and report back on the progress of their efforts, as required. In relation to this, I would like to express our support for the comments made by Canada yesterday regarding one states party's interpretation of their extension request obligations.

Mr. President

Mine clearance operations represents significant social and economical interventions in the society they take place. While the aim of mine clearance is to enhance security for individuals and communities, the process itself may have several consequences on the social and economic order in the affected communities, with different effects for girls, boys, women and men, as well as for different social, cultural and economic groups in the community. In the early days of the mine action industry, it is fair to say that key implementing actors, including both the UN and the NGOs, were fairly blind to possible adverse side-effects of their operations, including on issues like gender, land-rights and political conflicts.

However, we believe that all serious actors have improved their understanding of these issues in a remarkable way, and changed their operational procedures and practice accordingly. All the serious NGOs have integrated principles of do-no-harm and conflict sensitivity into their operations, and have come a long way in practical implementation of gender perspectives in all aspects of their work. This is not to say that these issues now are solved, but we are convinced that further improvements will come a result of political and institutional will, rather than more research. This is reflected in the Cartagena Action Plan, a documents we all have committed ourselves to, and if implemented will significantly improve our performance.

Thank you,