

**12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty  
ICBL Comments on Afghanistan's Extension Request  
3 December 2012**



Thank you Mr. President.

The ICBL has issued a number of comments on all extension requests -- it is a short document that is available outside this room. So let me just briefly make a few points.

Afghanistan's extension request was developed in consultation with mine action operators, presents a comprehensive analysis of the efforts to date and the remaining mine and ERW problem, and presents a clear and realistic plan to clear known contamination within 10 years. As such, it can be a model for other states.

If circumstances are favorable, it is possible for the clearance to be finished in less than the requested 10 years. There remain however many uncertainties for the plan to be carried out, such as violent conflict and political uncertainty, a decline in international funding, continuing discoveries of additional mine and ERW hazards and the sensitive issue of how to respond to the threat of IEDs used by armed opposition groups. The request even acknowledges a worst-case scenario of civil war that may render the program unfeasible.

This being said, I would like to emphasize four expectations of the ICBL for Afghanistan, which we hope can be reflected in States Parties' decisions on its request.

First, one of the outstanding uncertainties of the extension request has been a lack of national ownership. We welcome positive recent signs in this regard, including President Karzai's recent meeting with the directors of national demining organizations and instructions to the Ministry of justice to start work on national ownership issues. Prompt follow-up action by the government is needed to make sure this continues in the right direction. We also call on donor states to continue to fund the Mine Action Coordination Center's essential coordination role, in addition to clearance itself.

Second, States Parties should closely follow Afghanistan's reports on progress against the specific benchmarks laid out in the request. Afghanistan should also commit to submit revised plans to States Parties as appropriate, such as after the planned national survey is finished, or if the security or funding situation changes significantly in the coming years.

Third, while the request refers to leaving areas "impact-free," it is important that in practice Afghanistan ensures full compliance with Article 5, meaning the destruction of all antipersonnel mines in mined areas -- not just eliminating the impact on communities.

And finally, we note that Afghanistan's request sets the goal of finishing Article 5 obligations "within a shorter timeframe" if the funding situation and other circumstances are favorable. We welcome this ambitious goal and we stand with the Afghan people in hoping this will be possible.