

**Notes for ICRC statement on Angola's Extension Request,
12th Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention
Geneva, 3 December 2012**

With a long experience of humanitarian operations in Angola, the ICRC understands very well the enormous destruction wreaked in this country by decades of armed conflict. Similarly enormous reconstruction efforts have been required as a result, which have necessarily impeded efforts to free Angola of anti-personnel mines.

The ICRC has, however, also witnessed the consequences of anti-personnel mines on the Angolan population and regrets that more than a decade after the end of the armed conflict, Angola has been unable to identify the extent of its mined areas and proceed with a concrete plan for fulfilling its remaining clearance obligations.

Angola is seeking to remedy this situation through conducting a nationwide non-technical survey and mapping exercise, updating and correcting its database and carrying out training and capacity building. The ICRC acknowledges Angola's efforts to date and its commitment to gathering the necessary information before submitting a subsequent extension request. We also accept that the sheer size of the country, weather conditions and coordination issues all present challenges to proceeding as desired.

We nevertheless echo many of the concerns of the Analysing Group in regards to Angola's Extension Request, which is lacking detail in several respects. We are particularly concerned that a survey plan is lacking from the Extension Request. While we note that some additional information has been provided to the Analysing Group, the Request could still benefit from a clear timeline for activities and milestones against which progress could be measured.

Angola has been transparent with the States Parties in acknowledging that the survey "has been delayed [in the past] by systematic technical and administrative reasons." However, the Extension Request does not clearly specify how these problems have been, or will be, overcome in the future.

As noted by the Analysing Group, clear information is also lacking on the budget for each proposed activity, including what national funds Angola has already secured for clearance, any possible shortfalls and fundraising strategies. Clarification of these matters would instil greater confidence in the realisation of Angola's plans.

In regards to clearance, in light of the humanitarian goals of the Convention and the size of the task at hand, it would have been beneficial if Angola's extension request defined how it intends to prioritize clearance of some areas over others. We would have especially welcomed clarification of the prioritisation between demining aimed at improving the economic wellbeing of the citizens and state, and demining aimed at reducing the number of victims of anti-personnel mines or improving access to arable land.

On the basis of the Extension Request itself, it would appear that a three-year interim extension would be more appropriate than the five-year period currently sought. Angola intends to complete the nationwide non-technical survey by the end of 2013. If the mapping exercise and database rectification can be commenced concurrently with the survey, a three-year interim extension should enable Angola to present a well-prepared and thorough clearance plan with its extension request in March 2015. In addition, Angola should continue with its clearance efforts and keep the States Parties informed of progress through its Article 7 reports and at informal and formal Convention meetings and Conferences.

Regardless of the period of time granted by the States Parties, we fully support the recommendation contained in the Analysis that Angola be asked to provide complete and detailed reporting at the 13th Meeting of States Parties, including on the results of the non-technical survey, improvements to the data management systems, budget information and updates on clearance efforts.

We take this opportunity to remind the States Parties that the Convention permits the granting of a shorter period than that sought by the requesting State, if the timeframe sought is deemed excessive in light of the context and object and purpose of the Convention. It is also possible for the States Parties to attach conditions to the decision on the request, which the requesting State would be asked to fulfil.

This opinion on the legal interpretation of Article 5.5 was prepared by the ICRC in 2008 at the request of the President of the 8th Meeting of States Parties on behalf of the Analyzing Group, and can be found among the official Conference documents of the 9th MSP. Subsequent instruments support this interpretation and suggest the development of new legal norms in this direction.

Legalities aside, we hope that in the spirit of achieving the Convention's goals, Angola will agree with the recommendation of the Analyzing Group to reduce the time it is seeking in its interim extension request. Over the extension period, we hope that Angola will proceed with the planned national survey and mapping exercise as a matter of urgency, while regularly reporting on the fulfilment of its plans and how it is proceeding with reducing its mined areas.

Thank you.