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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

12MSP. Norway Statement on Mine Clearance
By May Elin Stener

Mr President

We would like to congratulate Denmark, Jordan, Guinea Bissau and Uganda for having met their obligations under Article 5. This shows that the Convention works, and that we are moving in the right direction towards our stated aim, a world free of mines. And it demonstrates that the only way forward is compliance with the obligations of the convention.

As we are halfway in the implementation of the Cartagena Action Plan, it is time to reflect on our common progress. Currently about a third of the 59 states parties with clearance obligations have reached completion, and we know that quite a few soon will follow. We should be both optimistic and ambitious in our aims for the Third Review conference, of which one should be having reduced the number of mine affected states significantly. While some mine-affected states still face a massive and complex contamination, we now see that it is possible for many mine affected states to comply with the clearance obligations, sooner than originally feared. Let us continue this positive trend. On the other hand, we are deeply concerned with the progress of clearance in some mine-affected states. Clearance is too slow. Unless this negative trend is reversed and replaced with increased speed and productivity, we will not meet the aims we have set for ourselves, and thus fail all those who are forced to live and work in areas contaminated by landmines.

Access to international funding is one significant factor for ensuring mine clearance progress, and implementation of Article 6 on Cooperation and Assistance is our tool for providing that. According to Landmine Monitor, mine action funding increased last year both from international donors and from the United Nations. However, as many states face a number of financial constraints, this situation is likely to change. This only reinforces the need to increase effectiveness and efficiency on all levels of mine clearance sooner rather than later. However, lack of international funding may not be the sole reason for the lack of progress in mine clearance. Based on what is reported at this meeting it also seems that too many mine-affected States Parties started too late and need to act faster to fulfill their Article 5 obligations. To reverse this negative trend, we need to see strong leadership from all those states that have responsibility for clearing mined areas on their own territories.

Mr. President

As more states are able to meet their clearance obligations, the issue of how to define the end-status becomes acute, and equally – how to address the issue of residual contamination, which, in some instances, may include anti-personnel mines. We know that all states that have experienced armed conflict on their territory will face a long-time problem with unexploded ordnance and other ERW. In Norway, military engineers undertake battle area clearance operations in the North every summer and spot EOD tasks all over the country, clearing ERW from World War 2. Occasionally AP-mines are also found during these operations. Most states with article 5 obligations will face the same kind of long-term contamination from ERW for decades after clearance of all known or suspected mined areas. Thus they need to establish a sustainable capacity for addressing such contamination, in the manner most suited to their national needs.

In line with action 40 of the Cartagena Plan, Norway is ready to assist states in the necessary transition from a dedicated mine clearance program to a long-term residual capacity in states where ERW will continue to be a humanitarian problem. However, international support for such capacities will not be on the same level as traditional mine clearance operations. Norway has just concluded a study on how best to structure our EOD/ERW capacity for the coming decades, and look forward to share our experiences with those interested.

In the same vein, we welcome the work that has taken place on how states parties best can address situations where new unknown mined areas are found. We took note of Jordan's announcements that they had found new mined areas as part of their post-completion verification process, and look forward to their continued reporting of progress in the clearance of these areas. In our view, transparency and accountability is the most important tool we have for compliance in this convention.

Mr. president

The convention is a humanitarian instrument established to respond to a grave humanitarian situation, concerning all people living in mine affected areas. But mines affect the lives of people differently according to several factors, and gender and age is probably among the most important of these. Therefore we must ensure that our efforts address the needs of all, girls, boys, women and men. In a workshop yesterday the Gender in Mine Action Program demonstrated both the importance of mainstreaming gender and age in mine action and provided practical examples of how this is best achieved. Norway has reporting on gender impact as a requirement for granting funding for mine action, and we hope that other actors take similar steps to ensure true gender equality in all aspects of mine action.

Thank you