

NETHERLANDS

Mr president,

As one of the co-chairs of the Standing Committee for Mine Clearance I will briefly look back at the activities of this committee in the last year. With your permission, I will then ask my fellow co-chair Mark versteden of the Netherlands to continue with some reflections on our work.

Let me first say that it was an honor for Mozambique to have served as one of the co-chairs of the standing committee on Mine Clearance Committee in 2013.

In the last year much has happened in the field of mine clearance.

Venezuela and Bhutan reported at the meeting of the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance in May that they have fulfilled their mine clearance obligations under article 5 and are now mine free. We once again would like to congratulate both countries on this achievement.

As co-chairs we have send letters to all delegations with outstanding clearance obligations with the request to brief the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance on the status of their ongoing clearance efforts.

We have also met with many delegations over the year to emphasise the importance of reporting to the state parties on ongoing clearance efforts in the respective countries.

Also as a result of these efforts, 33 states of the 36 states with outstanding clearance obligations have reported during the meeting of the Standing Committee on the status of their clearance activities.

2013 was also the year in which we saw the most extension requests so far, seven in total of which one was later withdrawn. As co-chairs for mine clearance we assisted the Article 5 analysis group by providing them with a pre analysis of the requests and send letters to the delegations concerned with requests for clarifications or, if necessary, more information.

Mr President,

Please allow me now to pass the floor to my fellow co-chair of the Netherlands who will offer some reflections on our work in 2013.

Thank you Elias,

Mr President,

Let me first say that like for Mozambique it was also an honor for the Netherlands to serve as co-chair of Mine Clearance.

A lot of work has been done and I am grateful for all delegations who have reported on the progress of their clearance activities.

Looking back at 2013, I would like to offer some reflections, draw some conclusions and maybe pose some questions which we hope can offer some food-for-thought on mine clearance, also with a view to the upcoming review conference in Maputo.

Firstly, pressure works! The states that have outstanding clearance obligations feel obliged to report on the status of their ongoing clearance activities and are thereby forced to at least once a year review these activities. In the discussions leading up to Maputo and in Maputo we have to discuss how we also in the future can maintain this pressure, maybe find ways to increase this pressure, but without overdoing it.

Secondly, although the debate on clearance was interactive to a certain level we will have to reflect on how we can improve on this interactiveness. How can we get a true dialogue going with states with clearance obligations? Here is of course also a clear link with cooperation and assistance.

Thirdly, this year saw most extension requests so far. In theory the deadlines for mine clearance can be extended again and again. We will need to talk how we will have to deal with future requests and how we follow up on current extensions to make sure new extensions are not necessary.

Fourthly, reporting has to be improved. Clearance plans have improved over the years and contain clear benchmarks in order to be able to measure progress on clearance. Unfortunately states do not always report on the progress towards these benchmarks. Belgium already did a lot of work on this issue, but how can we further improve the reporting process?

Lastly, we noticed many states still clear areas that do not need to be cleared but can be released after a non technical survey. This is an approach that was agreed on in the past by the states parties, but is too often not put into practice. We as co-chairs did not pay special attention to this issue this year, but maybe the new co-chairs for mine clearance can pick this up and make it a priority for next year.

Thank you Mr president