

**Comments on the Extension Request Submitted by Ethiopia
14th Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty
30 November 2015**



Thank you Mr Chair.

We are deeply disturbed that Ethiopia is currently in violation of the Mine Ban Treaty, having missed its June 2015 deadline for clearance. Violations of clearance deadlines are extremely rare and can be avoided through adequate clearance efforts or through the submission of a timely extension request. Not only is Ethiopia in an embarrassing position from a national perspective, but this also undermines the excellent overall record of compliance shown by States Parties as a group. This should be a concern for all States Parties.

The ICBL thanks Ethiopia for preparing the request and for seeking advice from the Implementation Support Unit in doing so. We have shared comments with the Committee on Article 5 and we note that additional information provided by Ethiopia has been made available on the ISU's website. This public exchange of information is in keeping with decisions made at the Seventh Meeting of States Parties, which were re-confirmed last year in Maputo – it is an important aspect of the spirit of openness and transparency that states voluntarily subscribe to when joining the treaty.

Since the transfer of the Ethiopian Mine Action Office's responsibilities in 2012, it appears that only very limited clearance of 0.1km² has taken place. Ethiopia has not submitted a transparency report since the one that covered year 2011. Very little information has filtered out as to what type of training or activities related to mine action the Combat Engineers have been undertaking in the past four years. To our knowledge, at least one international NGO specializing in clearance has approached Ethiopia numerous times since 2011 to offer support and advice, without receiving a response. The request foresaw that a number of activities were going to take place in 2015 such as training courses, the updating of standards and the deployment of clearance and survey teams and we note that Ethiopia's update provided today mentioned the building of a training facility but not the deployment of teams.

With over 1000 km² yet to be released, any faults in complying with good land release methodology will have a major impact on Ethiopia's ability to meet the targets set out in its request. As well-conducted survey activities will be essential for releasing the remaining areas, there ought to be a comprehensive plan for how the Combat Engineers are going to achieve the necessary competency in survey. Such activities are generally more difficult for military personnel, as many members of local communities will fear the consequences of possessing information about mines and other explosive threats, and it is often particularly difficult to get information from non-state armed actors who might have laid many of the mines. We would like to hear about Ethiopia's plan to address this situation.

Ethiopia projects that costs for the extension period will amount to over \$37 million USD, of which \$11 million USD will reportedly be covered by the government. The request does not provide information on how the remaining \$26 million USD will be raised, which makes it difficult for States Parties to assess whether the clearance plan can realistically be implemented. Considering that the responsibility for mine

action lies entirely within the military sector, we would also like to ask: what impact Ethiopia believes this will have on the international fundraising prospects?

It seems to be a lack of political will that put a stop to what previously had been very positive progress in Ethiopia. Implementing within five years the actions listed in the request will require a dramatic shift in the way the authorities approach mine action. States Parties should not accept to be faced with a black hole of information on progress in the coming years, like it has been the case in the past four years. Ethiopia must significantly improve the quality and frequency of its reporting both at treaty meetings and through Article 7 reports. We also note that a broad range of data is required in the analysis under item #24, and while we would have preferred that a shorter period of time be granted -- just to complete survey as a start -- we certainly do support the segment of the decision that outlines reporting expectations.