

**Fourteenth Meeting of States Parties to the
Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
Statement on Article 5 by H.E. Henk Cor van der Kwast, Ambassador
for Disarmament**

Mr President,

As this is the first time I take the floor in a national capacity, allow me first to congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency. As a fellow Benelux country and a close neighbour, we have full confidence that under your leadership this meeting will lead us to further strengthening the APLC on the road to a mine-free world. Let me assure you that you can count on the full support of this delegation.

Mr President,

As states parties to this successful Convention, we have accomplished a lot since 1999, on stockpile destruction, assistance to victims, cooperation and assistance and by establishing a strong norm against the use of anti-personnel mines.

It is especially in the area of mine clearance that we have made the most progress.

Mine clearance is the backbone of this Convention. If there are no more mines in the ground, they cannot make any more victims. It is as simple as that.

So far 29 of the 59 states parties with anti-personnel mines on their territory have declared themselves mine free. This is a great achievement.

But more remains to be done.

Last year in Maputo we all agreed that we aim to accomplish all outstanding obligations under this Convention by 2025. This also implies that we have to clear the remaining mines before that date.

With our common goal of 2025 in mind, we have to look carefully at the progress and at the extension of deadlines. So far 26 out of 30 parties with mine clearance obligations have requested extensions of their clearance deadlines.

Extension of the deadline is part of the Convention and states have the right to use that if needed. At the same time, states do have an obligation, which they voluntarily entered, to do as much as possible within the deadline.

We as the international community, and even more so as State Parties to the Convention, should do our utmost to help other State Parties to meet their obligations. That is in our common interest and in the interest of the Convention.

Why are states having problems with meeting the deadlines?

In some cases the task at hand may simply be too large to clear all mines within the 10 years after accession to this Convention, as stipulated in the Convention text.

In some cases money may be a problem. In other cases it may be caused by a lack of political priority. And in yet other cases there may be technical obstacles, such as difficult terrain or climate.

But if we are serious about working towards a mine free world we need to start addressing these problems.

In our view, the way forward would be to identify outstanding issues with the states concerned, and to address those in a comprehensive plan of action. On the basis of this plan of action, interested states can form coalitions to assist the country in question to implement their obligations. There is no 'one size fits all'; solutions will have to be tailor made.

Cooperation efforts should be aimed at making a difference on the ground. Ownership of the affected state is a crucial prerequisite for success. Depending on the efforts needed, projects can be, or should be, multi-annual.

This way of addressing outstanding obligations in a direct way by a group of willing states was labelled 'Partnerships for completion' in Maputo.

We believe that such an individual approach on clearance issues is the more necessary as the question can indeed be raised: how we can help those countries with a backlog to move further ahead. Cooperation often brings more progress than criticism.

As the 5th donor on mine clearance we stand ready to assist countries in bringing us closer to a mine free world in 2025.

Mr. President

Mahatma Gandhi once said "you must be the change you wish to see in the world". As we wish to see a mine free world by 2025, we are willing to do our share to make this political goal a reality.

Thank you!