



Norwegian People's Aid

Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

14th Meeting of States Parties

30 October – 4 December 2015, Geneva

**Statement by MAG on behalf of MAG and Norwegian People's Aid
on International Cooperation & Assistance**

(Check Against Delivery)

Mr President,

This statement is delivered by MAG on behalf of MAG and Norwegian People's Aid (NPA).

Dedication is the word which positively captures the history of international support to the Mine Ban Treaty. International funding since 2006 has totalled more than three billion US dollars, and more than 50 States have reported funding mine action assistance. In most countries, national authorities have assumed their rightful leadership role of coordination and management of the mine action sector. Together, we have constructed a sector that is professional, accountable, and increasingly outward-looking.

As a community, we should therefore be proud of the efforts made so far to implement Article 6. But while figures are impressive and symbolise the incredible collective dedication to this ban, there is still significant room to challenge ourselves and find ways to improve. NPA and MAG believe that this is an obligation that we must embrace enthusiastically and constructively.

International cooperation and assistance is of course not just about Article 5. But that is, rightly in our view, the largest area of donor investment and also an area where we can do more to squeeze every possible impact from precious, yet finite funding. With this in mind, we therefore see potential value in achieving closer alignment between the work of the committees, as just raised by the Netherlands.

We will focus here on three areas: prioritisation of international assistance, efficiency and effectiveness of mine action programming, and the scope of use of mine action funds.

Mr President,

As two of the largest international mine action operators, we continue to see the daily human impact and suffering caused by landmines across the world, usually on the poorest communities. We are concerned that countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad and Angola risk being left

behind in international cooperation and assistance frameworks. What will be the priorities for assistance, and what information will these priorities be based on?

It is vital that we strike the right balance between implementation of legal obligations and meeting the humanitarian imperative which underpins this Convention and our organisations. This is not easy, but having to make choices that we do not want to make is unfortunately a reality throughout the humanitarian and development sectors. MAG and NPA both feel that more can be done to focus international cooperation and assistance on areas where contamination from landmines is having greatest impact, including in States not yet Party to the Convention.

This is absolutely not a question of whether all mines should be cleared – the Convention is clear on that. It is about improving the prioritisation of finite donor funding and international mine action assistance, so that it can have the greatest immediate impact for people who are suffering most, and ensure that national programmes' dependency on international assistance is as low as possible.

We also believe that more can be done to establish a better and more realistic understanding of the remaining contamination in a country, and also a clearer understanding of humanitarian impact. Progress in these areas will enable greater evidence-based decision making.

Mr President,

If we look at the number of Article 5 extension requests still being submitted, we might conclude that the issue is only one of funding scale. NPA and MAG are confident that this is not the case. The reality is one of extremely varying levels of quality, efficiency and effectiveness in mine action programming.

Broadly speaking, the mine action community has all of the operational tools and good practice it needs to succeed. But these tools are all-too-often not drawn on fully, particularly in the case of survey and risk-based approaches to operations. Failure to fully embrace survey approaches – both technical and non-technical – along with excessively risk-averse national standards are often a major cause of inefficiency in mine action programmes. This lowers donor value for money, extends Article 5 timeframes and results in further human suffering.

We have seen significant advances when donors, authorities and operational organisations work at the national level to identify opportunities to improve standards, approaches and methodologies. We believe there is greater scope for constructive challenge and dialogue between these stakeholders at the national level, to identify ways in which operational efficiency and effectiveness can be improved. We emphasise that this does not need to require additional funding, yet could have significant impact to our collective work.

Thirdly Mr President,

We would like to turn to the scope of mine action. Many multi-mandate organisations, including our own, undertake arms management and destruction activities with weapons and munitions. This area of work is important and needs greater levels of support, but we believe that it lies beyond mine action's scope. We are concerned to hear that, in some countries with Article 5 obligations, funding allocated to mine action has been reprogrammed to ammunition management. We respectfully call on States not to do this. The scope of mine action and its international cooperation and assistance

must remain focused on landmines, cluster munitions, explosive remnants of war and some elements of IED clearance in areas where active hostilities have ceased.

We respectfully caution against the wholesale inclusion of IED response within mine action, and for a clear division of labour between C-IED or work undertaken in support of military forces, and the neutral, impartial and humanitarian work undertaken by impartial organisations in areas where active hostilities have ceased. Within mine action, we also call on States Parties to assess the various instruments and funding channels available to them, and choose the ones that give the most value for money.

To conclude, Mr President,

The mine action sector is different to how it was 15 years ago, and the period ahead is not a simple one. There is new contamination in increasingly complex conflict contexts, and there are signs that the period of funding consistency that the sector has experienced for many years may be slowly coming to an end.

But the international community has a responsibility to rise to, and work through these challenges, and make the difficult decisions ahead of us. Mature mine action programmes have proven that a spirit of partnership, transparency and accountability, constructive challenge and an open mind to new ways of working can improve the pace of progress and impact of cooperation and assistance. So we call on States Parties to embrace this way of working so that, together, we can achieve both the goal of no more suffering from landmines, and the complete implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty.

We thank you, Mr President.

ENDS