



ICRC

Eighteen Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Geneva, 16-20 November 2020

International Committee of the Red Cross Statement on mine clearance and risk education and reduction

At the outset, the ICRC wishes to congratulate Chile and the United Kingdom for having completed their mine clearance this year, in spite of the technical complexities and challenges in survey and clearance.

Despite this welcomed achievement, 32 States Parties remain contaminated by anti-personnel mines, and several of them are not fully on track in implementation according to the Landmine Monitor and Mine Action Review. We note with regret that, while 9 States Parties have requested for extension of their Article 5 deadlines to this Meeting, one State Party did not do so for its 31 December 2020 deadline, and risks being non-compliant with Article 5(3) of the Convention and consequently undermining the Convention's integrity. We would like to stress that the integrity of the Convention relies on its good faith implementation by all States Parties, including through the timely submission of extension requests when necessary. We stand ready to support the Committee on Article 5 Implementation, the Presidency and the Implementation Support Unit in stepping up efforts to ensure effective implementation of mine clearance obligation by all concerned States Parties.

Turning to anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature, the ICRC has repeatedly called upon States Parties to confirm that all obligations of the Convention apply equally to anti-personnel mines that are industrially manufactured and those of an improvised nature. In this respect, we welcome that the Oslo Action Plan addressed the issue of the continued use of improvised mines and their humanitarian consequences inflicted upon civilians, notably through Action#21. The full implementation of this Action is in particular relevant in view of the high number of recorded casualties in 2019 - of which the vast majority (80%) are civilians, largely due to the large-scale use of improvised mines in several contexts, according to the Landmine Monitor report. We urge States Parties with improvised mine contamination to ensure that such contamination is reported and removed within the established deadlines without delay.

We also welcome the inclusion in the Oslo Action Plan of a new section dedicated to mine risk education and reduction, in view of the critical importance these activities play in protecting civilians from the risks posed by landmines pending their clearance. In this respect, to support States Parties in establishing an evidence-based baseline for implementation, working with the Iraqi Red Crescent Society, the ICRC established a data collection tool and process in some of the heavily affected parts of Iraq. Together we surveyed some 60 villages for mines and

explosive remnants of war in 2019 and published an information note to share with the authorities and other organizations. This is just one example of the 51 weapon contamination projects carried out by the ICRC in collaboration with Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies in 2019. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's guidelines on risk awareness and safer behaviour (RASB) were also published and translated into Arabic, French and Spanish.

It is important to underline that the global COVID-19 pandemic has augmented risks associated with mine contamination to affected communities and vulnerable groups, in particular refugees and IDPs. On one hand, the pandemic has exacerbated the existing difficulties of civilians living in conflicts in gaining access to essential resources and services, which may lead people to resort to risky behaviours to earn their livelihood, exposing them to danger posed by mine contaminated area; on the other hand, physical distancing and other restrictive measures have posed new challenges to conducting risk education and other risk reduction activities. In this respect, we are pleased to share that the ICRC together with Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies continued to disseminate RASB messages in contexts such as Iraq and Syria, using alternative virtual or other distant communication channels.

In conclusion, the ICRC urges States Parties to take all necessary measures to ensure that the deadlines set out in Article 5 and the extension request process be followed, with the aim of achieving the ambition of a world free of anti-personnel mines as soon as possible and to reinforce risk education and reduction measures in the meantime.