



**ICRC**

**Seventh Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction**

**Statement on behalf of the  
President of the International Committee of the Red Cross**

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Check against delivery

This Convention is built on a few simple ideas: Civilians shouldn't be killed or maimed by weapons that strike blindly and senselessly – neither during nor after conflicts. Wars should end when the fighting stops. Communities should be free to rebuild without risking lives and livelihoods to do so.

The historic success of this Convention, adopted in Oslo exactly 9 years ago today, is also based on a few simple ingredients: the personal engagement of activists, diplomats, military officers and government officials who made it happen and continue to make it work; the commitment to cooperative international action to sustain it; and the courage and perseverance of mine clearers and health professionals who implement it.

Success has taken many forms: over 38 million stockpiled anti-personnel mines destroyed, many thousands of hectares of fertile land which have been cleared and again provide food instead of fear, and tens of thousands of disabled victims who, through rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration, have regained their mobility and confidence.

But the coming years will again test our commitment, perseverance and solidarity. The Convention is entering a critical phase. In just two and a half years the first deadlines for clearance of anti-personnel mines will have passed. Success will mean that many more mine-affected countries can declare that they have cleared all mine areas within their deadlines. This will require better planning, renewed political commitment and more resources.

Some affected States may be unable to meet their deadlines. The credibility of the Convention's central commitment to the elimination of anti-personnel mines will depend on how requests for deadline extensions are handled. The process must provide an honest assessment of the obstacles which have prevented complete clearance of mined areas in the previous ten years. It must involve the development of realistic plans for completion during the extension period and the identification of resources to fulfil these plans. And it must be faithful to the Convention's traditions of cooperation and transparency among all actors.

The clock is ticking. This Meeting of States Parties needs to speed up implementation of clearance commitments. It needs to provide clarity on when, how and to whom any extension requests must be made and clarify which information will be required to enable States Parties to assess and decide upon requests.

In addition to the promise to eliminate anti-personnel mines forever, the Convention also contains a promise to the hundreds of thousands of mine victims. Many have been helped. But far, far more have been left behind. Forgotten! Investment in health infrastructure in most mine affected communities remains inadequate and is all too often a low priority. We welcome the increased involvement of health professionals and socio-economic reintegration experts in these meetings and in fulfilling the Convention's commitments. It is encouraging that national plans for improving care and rehabilitation for mine victims and others in affected areas were developed within the Convention's framework and recorded in the year after the Nairobi Review Conference. The challenge is now for States Parties to implement their plans, with

priority given to developing and supporting local health and rehabilitation services and improving access to such services by persons in need. Meeting the promises of this Convention to landmine survivors means that we must commit ourselves at this meeting of States Parties to record substantial progress on behalf of mine victims by the Second Review Conference in 2009.

In closing, let me return to the simple ideas on which this Convention is based. Wars should end when the fighting stops. Civilians should not be the victims of senseless weapons. But sadly civilians are paying the price of such weapons each day. The global burden of clearing explosive remnants of war is increasing, not decreasing.

In addition to anti-personnel mines, the main culprits include anti-vehicle mines - one of which struck an ICRC vehicle two weeks ago in the Casamance region of Senegal - tragically ending the life of our colleague Jeannette Fournier. It is time for the strictest possible regulation of such weapons. Recent events vividly reminded us, once again, of the disproportionate impact on the civilian population of cluster munitions and the huge clearance burden they create. The use of cluster munitions can no longer remain unregulated. States should deal with this matter urgently.

An important part of the global effort to protect civilians from the threat of death and mutilation by munitions which go on killing until they are cleared is the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War, which enters into force in November. This agreement must become the operational framework for mobilising the international community to clear unexploded ordnance. We urge all States present here to join.

The Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-personnel Mines has set many new standards which go far beyond the legal norm it contains. It has created a new way of uniting governments, humanitarian organisations and civil society in response to horrific human suffering. It has raised the expectation that civilians shouldn't face the same fate from other munitions as they have from anti-personnel landmines. It has shown that promises made in a treaty can be kept. This meeting must help ensure that they are kept. Our actions outside of this forum to address humanitarian concerns raised by other munitions will demonstrate whether the lessons of this unique Convention have indeed been learned.