



8th Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention (8MSP)

18-22 November, Dead Sea, Jordan

Written statement as contribution to the discussion under
Agenda item 10 “General exchange of views”

by

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Chair,

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is most grateful for the opportunity to make a statement as part of this general debate.

The fact that this Meeting of States Parties marks the tenth anniversary of the Mine Ban Convention is also an occasion for all participants to reflect on the value brought to the Treaty and its implementation processes by civil society – in particular the ICBL (International Campaign to Ban Landmines) – and others who fought for so long to get the treaty idea accepted and the text adopted ten years ago.

Our purpose in this contribution to the general debate is to highlight the human costs of these weapons. National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have worked throughout the world to strengthen respect for the ideals of the Treaty and its legally binding language. We will continue, everywhere in the world, to work for its success.

Our work will include a wide variety of actions, ranging from preventive activities to providing first aid, medical care and psychosocial support for victims and affected families and communities. Our work will also continue to include using the status our National Societies enjoy as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field to ensure that effective programming is part of the work of all relevant agencies in their countries.

We will also maintain our roles, including importantly at the community level, in support of public awareness campaigns which reach all the people, without any distinction of any kind.

We see such campaigns as being most effectively led by youth, and being directed for the benefit of children. Other speakers have brought forward examples of the terrible damage inflicted on innocent children by mines, but there is still not enough done to take this priority for awareness to action in some countries.

We see it as important that all governments should recognise the value which can be added to their efforts by utilising the unique capacity of National Societies, especially at the community level. This involves their specific role as auxiliaries, mixed with the character as community-based organisations with countrywide networks of trained volunteers, everywhere in the world.

The Convention itself is a unique example of the dynamics that formed between civil society and governments ten years ago, creating an international momentum to ban antipersonnel mines. In the implementation period that has taken place over the last decade, most States party have emphasized the importance of developing and maintaining links to civil society and their Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies.

Unfortunately, this has not always resulted in the institutional linkages of civil society to programs that are important to ensure the necessary sustainability of the partnerships.

More could be done to ensure that civil society involvement, including the preventive activities and the victim assistance efforts of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are included in national development plans and budgets. As part of this, the Conference documents could contain much more information on the partnership actions developed by governments with civil society.

We trust that with the ten years of experience now accumulated, future MSPs will give a high priority to such partnerships and their sustainability.

This is a challenge, but one which might be partially met by some governments within the same broad policy line as the one which will support their implementation of the new United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

When the Convention enters into force, States party will establish a Committee to receive national implementation reports. The IFRC looks forward to discussing the way it will work to see the extent to which the victim assistance provisions of the Mine Ban Convention will be relevant to the reporting systems to be put in place.

I mention this procedure because National Societies will be in a position, again using their auxiliary status, to hold discussions at the national level about the best ways of ensuring that victim assistance is embedded in long-term programming by the relevant government agencies.

This is important, for there is a danger that once the most urgent national mine clearance needs are met, priority for mine victims will diminish as the needs of the victims are absorbed into regular social welfare budgets which are often already stretched.

It is therefore important to ensure that support continues for the implementation of comprehensive, well coordinated, long term national programs.

Many mine victims and other people with disabilities remain disabled for the rest of their lives. Damage caused by antipersonnel mines is however entirely man-made, and entirely preventable through the implementation of and respect for the Convention.

So, Chairman, what we want are better and stronger partnerships at the national level to ensure that mine victims and other people with disabilities receive the necessary care and support, and new accidents are prevented.

The value and actions of these partnerships should then be brought to the international level for knowledge sharing and exchange. This is a program which should have the active support of governments, including in terms of capacity-building and resources at the national level.

Such initiatives must concentrate on finding ways to enable the involvement of the affected populations themselves, including empowered Youth, both directly and through humanitarian organisations such as the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

It must also pay full attention to the need for the integration of gender perspectives, in recognition of the part women play in any and every community.

The work of this Conference is fully consistent with the theme for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement for the next four years – "Together for Humanity". This theme is the centrepiece for the work governments, National Societies and observers from around the world will be doing at the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent at the end of November. We will return to future meetings on Mines with outcomes from that Conference, and the hope that our theme will

bring yet more support and enthusiasm to the work being done by the States party to the Mine Ban Convention.

Thank you.