

Mine Ban Convention

8th Meeting of the States Parties in Jordan, 18 – 22 November 2007

Norwegian statement under Item 11 c Clearing mined areas

Ambassador Steffen Kongstad

Thank you, Your Royal Highness, Mr. President,

The Mine Ban Convention is about to enter what is probably its most important and interesting phase since its adoption ten years ago as the first deadlines for meeting obligations under Article V come up in 15 months' time. This is an opportunity to demonstrate the success of the Convention, and the value of a model where states, non-governmental organisations and international organisations work together sharing a common humanitarian goal. Several States Parties have already completed their mine clearance obligations, and we congratulate them. In the coming few years, our achievements will be measured, discussed and commented upon. Our commitment to the Convention, our commitment to compliance with the various obligations, and particularly our commitment to landmine survivors must remain at the highest level to maintain the credibility of the Convention.

One lesson we have learned during the eight years the Convention has been in force, is the importance of national ownership. National ownership has in many respects become a clichée, but true national ownership is decisive to effective and sustainable mine action and implementation of the Convention. Being assembled here at the shores of the Dead Sea, it is natural to point to how Jordan has addressed its landmines problem. Through an effective, well organised, civilian national authority Jordan has during the last years produced major achievements in clearing land. Jordan serves as a model of how effective national ownership and responsibility can be assumed.

Mr. President,

(Implementation of Article V obligations)

The obligation under Article V is to clear all known mined areas as soon as possible and no later than 10 years after the entry into force of the Convention for a particular State Party. It is essential that the utmost is done to implement the obligations as soon as possible. We have focused on accelerated implementation in our period as first Co-Rapporteur and then Co-Chair of the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Mine Action Technologies. Over the last few years, we have also seen the development of alternative and more efficient approaches to the safe release of suspected mined areas .

Despite efforts made, challenges are of such a magnitude that not all countries will be able to fulfil their obligations within the deadlines. The Convention opens up for extension requests. In spite of tremendous efforts by States Parties, NGOs and mine clearers, there are still large mined areas to be cleared. In order to fulfil the Convention's obligations, all known mined areas must be cleared, even areas where mines at the moment do not present a pressing humanitarian problem.

One of our priorities during the Norwegian and Chilean term as Co-Chairs of the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance has been to ensure that further steps are taken to identify efficient, effective and practical ways to fulfil Article V obligations. One part of this was a

seminar on the Implementation of Article V in Latin America in August 2007, held by Chile and Norway in Santiago.

The seminar demonstrated that affected countries face very diverse situations, as regards both the background for the problem, the nature of the contamination, and with regard to what efforts are necessary to overcome challenges. The discussions were good, open and fruitful, and have been summarised in the publication introduced by Chile in the Co-Chairs' opening remarks and which is available outside this room.

In October this year, Norway and Mozambique held a seminar in Maputo with the objective of presenting and discussing some of the challenges facing the national mine action authorities of Mozambique – as a country with very demanding Article V obligations and approaching its Article V deadlines, in a situation with changing funding modalities. The outcome of the seminar will be presented at the meeting of the Resource Mobilisation Contact Group during lunch time today and in the Norwegian intervention under the Cooperation and Assistance session.

When discussing practical implementation of Article V obligations, we have over the last years seen interesting concepts being developed. Rapid land release through other means than mine clearance has been advocated by many as one way to increase the cost-effectiveness of mine action. Cancellation and area reduction are two concepts of land release that could greatly reduce the time and resources needed to allow people to resume their lives and activities safely in an area previously suspected to be mine-affected. Of course, resources are needed to develop these concepts further, and to identify, plan and implement specific tasks that will facilitate efficient release of suspected mined areas. But it is important to underline that security standards and quality must not be compromised as new methods are being developed.

Integrating a gender perspective when discussing mine clearance is essential, as, for example, women and men, girls and boys use their land and environment in different ways, and different methods of mine clearance and land release will affect them differently.

Mr. President,

(Article 5 extensions process)

Last year, the 7th Meeting of the States Parties agreed on a process for submitting, receiving, assessing and deciding extension requests. The process sets certain timelines, and provides guidance to States Parties on how to handle extension requests. A voluntary template has been developed to assist States Parties in developing their requests. The process will be open and transparent, and will be the responsibility of the President working together with the Co-Chairs and Co-Rapporteurs. The Implementation Support Unit will be – and indeed already is – playing a crucial role in assisting States Parties in preparing the submission of extension requests. We strongly recommend all States Parties with Article V obligations that see the need for an extension, to make the fullest use of the invaluable support that the ISU can provide. We also urge States Parties in a position to do so, to provide additional funding to enable the ISU to take on this responsibility in a satisfactory way.

The agreed process for extension requests must be followed and fully utilised. It is an opportunity for affected states to demonstrate their commitment, their political will, the

resources they are willing to put into meeting the Convention's obligations. Requests must be accompanied by a realistic and concrete national plan clearly demonstrating such political will to act and full national ownership of the process, in accordance with Article V, paragraphs 3, 4, 5, and 6. Compliance with the Convention remains the responsibility of the individual State Party.

A realistic case for an extension based on identified criteria and assumptions must be made. The Convention opens up for the possibility of further extensions. There is therefore no need to immediately request a full 10 year extension unless it is documented that the magnitude of the problem clearly is such that 10 years is needed. This is to be clarified in the extension request and national plan.

(Cooperation and assistance for mine clearance activities)

Cooperation and assistance related to Article V and the process for extension requests should be seen as an opportunity for mine-affected countries to accelerate a state party's fulfilment of Article V obligations; an opportunity to improve or develop national plans, and – last but not least – to make a case for resources needed from the international donor community. States Parties in a position to do so have an obligation under Article VI to provide cooperation and assistance to States Parties with mine clearance obligations. However, donors will base their funding decisions on the quality of national plans that should accompany a request for extension. This is an issue that we will discuss further this afternoon.

Specific support for efforts to meet Article V commitments is needed to ensure compliance with the Convention, its humanitarian goals and, ultimately, the credibility of the Convention. Modalities in mine action funding are changing, and we need to respond and adapt to that. Even if funding for mine action again has increased since the dip last year, it is not likely that there will be an increase in overall funding for mine action in coming years. It is a challenge to make better use of existing resources. National resources should be identified to supplement existing resources. The land release concept that I referred to earlier, is one way that we are certain will contribute to a better overall resource utilisation.

Your Royal Highness,

(The way forward)

We look forward to cooperating closely with you as President, with the Coordinating Committee, with mine-affected countries, and with the ISU as we enter the first year of processing extension requests. The Convention's credibility is at stake, as is the lives and livelihoods of thousands of potential landmine victims. We must all rise to the occasion and do our utmost to take the opportunity that exists to improve, accelerate and reinforce our efforts to clear all mines and to reach our ultimate goal of a world free of mines and no new victims.

Finally, I wish to invite all interested parties to the lunch event of the Resource Mobilisation Contact Group. We will further elaborate on the plans for the work of the group over the next two years. Deputy Foreign Minister Henrique Banze of Mozambique will reflect on the resource situation in his country. We will also discuss other issues related to resource utilisation. The event is taking place in the Moutah Room.

Thank you.