

**Eight Meeting of the States Parties to the
Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines
Dead Sea, 18-22 November 2007**

ICRC Statement on clearance- Article 5

Thank you Mr. President,

Let me begin by thanking all States Parties that have taken the floor in the last two days to provide updates on their progress and plans.

The ICRC wish to congratulate the Kingdom of Swaziland for having completed the clearance of all known mines in areas under its jurisdiction or control before the end of its deadline and for having used the declaration of completion template adopted at the 7th MSP. We also commend the few states, such as Jordan, France, Serbia or Albania, that have stated that they expect to meet their clearance deadlines.

However, we regret that 3 States Parties which have deadlines falling in 2009 and 2010 did not take the floor to share with us their plans on the implementation of article 5 of the Convention.

We also note with concern that, while all States which have taken the floor have reported on past progress, many, which have a deadline in 2009 and 2010, have not indicated whether they expect to achieve clearance of all mined areas within their respective deadline, how they will do so and if not, whether they will request an extension of time in the coming months.

The ICRC witnesses with deep concern that more than half of the States which have a deadline falling in 2009 or 2010 have indicated that they will request an extension of time to meet their obligation under Article 5 of the Convention.

While the number of requests for extension of time is not a problem in itself, the extent to which States, which have a problem of limited scale, have relied on this possibility contained in the Convention, is unfortunate and undermines the humanitarian purposes of the Convention and its credibility.

Importantly, we must understand that every day during which the Convention's deadline is not met is a day in which civilians are put at risk. Extensions will most likely be measured in lost limbs, lost lives and lost livelihoods.

A number of extension requests will be submitted in the next few months. It is essential that these requests are managed in a way which maintains the credibility of the Convention and promote completion within a realistic, well planned and adequately funded extension period.

We must recognize that an extension request reflects problems by a State Party in meeting its commitments under the Convention. It is essential that the process of making and examining an extension request identifies the problems which have been encountered and ensures that they are adequately addressed by the requesting State with collective support from States in a position to provide assistance.

We believe that extension periods should only be granted for the minimum period necessary to carry out a well prepared and financially viable clearance plan. The 9MSP should have the option to grant an extension which is less than the actual time requested by the State Party, if the request is received late or if the Conference believes that demining activities could and should be undertaken more rapidly.

Furthermore, we would like to stress that no extension request should be made or, if made, approved if the delay in clearance would constitute a *de facto* use of anti-personnel mines through a failure to clear them. For the ICRC, a *de facto* use means leaving mines in the ground in order to obtain a military advantage from them.

Finally, we hope that the pace of demining activities between now and the occurrence of deadlines for States Parties will be increased. States should take advantage of this time to diligently implement their obligations under article 5 of the Convention

I thank you, Mr. President.