

Intersession meetings to the Landmine Convention  
Standing committee on mine clearance  
Updates from states that have been granted an extension  
Statement by Norway

Check against delivery

Thank you madam Co-chair

We have listened with care to the presentations of the states with extended deadlines. With some notable exceptions, we are deeply concerned with the progress of the mine clearance in many of these states. It goes too slow, for a number of different reasons. Unless this negative trend is reversed and replaced with increased speed and productivity, we will not meet the aims we have set for ourselves, and thus fail all those who are forced to live and work in areas contaminated by landmines.

This is of particular concern because it goes right to the core of the legal obligations that all states parties have freely signed up to, namely to clear all mined areas as soon as possible, and in not more than ten years.

The Convention is our framework for ending the suffering caused by landmines for all time. It was made as a partnership between mine-affected and not-affected states. Article 5 on mine clearance and Article 6 on international cooperation and assistance structures the roles and responsibilities of all states in reaching the aim of a mine free world. Mine affected states have the responsibility to clear mined areas within their territory while states in a position to do so have responsibility to provide support to assist mine clearance.

Since entry into force there has been high levels of financial support for mine clearance, even in the recent period of significant financial challenges among the states that traditionally support mine action. In addition, new methods of addressing the mine problem - such as improved non-technical and technical surveys - have in some countries resulted in significant improved productivity in mine clearance.

In spite of this, overall progress in mine clearance is disappointing. Some of the states that have performed significantly below their own plans are among those that have received high levels of international support over time. It may be too easy to identify lack of funding as the primary reason for lack of progress.

It seems that lack of political leadership, failure to cooperate with international expertise, inflexible bureaucracy and lack of coordination between various government entities, cause equally serious obstacles to progress in mine clearance. This does not only concern states with needs for international assistance. We are particularly concerned of the lack of progress in states granted an extension, that should be in a position to clear all mined areas in relatively short time, but have chosen not to do so.

Norway has consistently argued for the importance of national ownership on mine action activities. States Parties have agreed to a working definition of national ownership, identifying political will as a key factor. We are concerned that such will is waning in some states with Article 5 obligations, and that as a result, international support will decrease as well. This will be a negative spiral that may be difficult to turn in the future.

The ICBL have presented their view of performance of mine clearance among states with extended deadlines. While we do not agree with all of their assessments of individual states, in particular because we find that the document may over-simplify the complexity of implementing Article 5, we warmly welcome this initiative. We need to start addressing the lack of progress in mine clearance in mine-affected states, and that discussion should be based on what actually is happening on the ground.

Mdm Chair

The picture is not entirely bleak. We have heard from states that have finished and we would like to congratulate Guinea Bissau and Jordan for their completion. We have also heard from states that are on track to finish in time, or only with minor delays. We would like to acknowledge the commitment to the Convention demonstrated by these states, and look forward to their formal declarations of 5.1 compliance in the near future.

As more states get closer to their deadlines, it may be useful for this community to engage in an informed discussion on what it takes to be able to make such a declaration. What exactly is expected by a state with article 5 obligations to declare itself mine-free in compliance with the Convention? And more importantly, how can we ensure that the status of “mine-free” does not become an impossible quest for a holy grail for those most affected states, but an end-state that is possible and desirable to achieve.

In our view Article 5.1 compliance is the end result of a due-diligence process, following recognised standards, ensuring that all reasonable efforts to identify and clear all mined areas have been made by the national authorities, in an accountable and transparent manner. Due to differences in contamination patterns and conflict history, such processes may be implemented differently by the individual states. Therefore we believe that this community would gain from enhanced clarity of what it takes to declare completion to avoid misunderstandings and create incentives for doing so.

This issue have been discussed before, already at the 6MSP in Zagreb. The ISU has summed up these discussions and the understandings that have evolved within the convention in a booklet presented last year, and together with concrete experiences made by states that have declared completion, this forms an excellent basis for such discussions.

Thank you

