

**Statement by Ms. Sara Sekkenes,  
Sr. Programme Adviser, UNDP, to the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, on behalf of  
the UN Mine Action Team,  
10 MAY 2006**

Mr. Co-chair,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the plenary on behalf of the UN mine action team. The UN also would like to thank the Implementation Support Unit, Co-chairs and affected countries for constructively operationalizing the Intersessional Work Program's Standing Committee on Mine Clearance in line with the Nairobi Action Plan with reference to the attention given to affected countries in presenting their plans and progress in meeting Article 5 obligations.

The number of affected countries presenting steps that are being taken to meet expectations in deadlines for the implementation of Article 5 are impressive and increasing and the actual progress they display is impressive. In this regard, the UN welcomes the Co-chair's discussion paper on successful completion of Article 5 obligations, an issue that is quickly moving its way up the agenda. The paper provides a road map for the way ahead between now and the 2008 Meeting of States Parties.

The Nairobi Action Plan states that all States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty shall "strive to ensure that few, if any, States Parties will feel compelled to request an extension in accordance with the procedure set out in Article 5, paragraph 3-6 of the Convention". We believe it is crucial for *all* States Parties—not only those 22 countries whose deadline fall in 2009—to have a clear and *common* understanding of the expectations in successfully achieving treaty obligations. In addition, we should define a clear and *common* understanding on dealing with requests for extension of clearance deadlines, if countries are compelled to do so.

It is in the interest of all States Parties and all other stakeholders to ensure that the 2009 Review Conference is a success. This is true not only politically for the convention but more importantly for its overarching objectives in advancing the human security and development potential for affected communities and hence the need for *all* States Parties to fully appreciate the efforts and resources needed to reach such a success.

Our NGO colleagues and the ICRC have for some time expressed urgency in accelerating efforts and obtaining a common understanding of what it entails to have completely met Article 5 obligations and how such fulfillment should be communicated.

The discussion paper underlines the importance of States Parties with approaching deadlines to be fully committed to meet Article 5 requirements based on national implementation plans specifying *how* obligations will be met and furthermore, *within* deadlines.

In addition other on-going assistance, the UN Completion Initiative (referred to earlier today by Albania, Zambia and Yemen) is *an example* of efforts to support the development and implementation of national plans. The completion plans strive to accelerate mine action and clearance in countries with a small to modest landmine problem. A dedicated and concentrated effort with relatively modest financial investment will enable these countries to fully address their mine problem and meet their obligations under the Article 5 of the Mine Ban Treaty. We call on donors to support such initiatives.

Based on current information, however, it is also likely that a number of the moderately to heavily affected countries with deadlines in 2009 and even 2010 may not be able to fully

meet their Article 5 obligations in time. Obtaining clarity on process – should an extension be required – will allow those States Parties to prepare accordingly. In this regard, it is vital that mine-affected States Parties communicate circumstances which impede their ability to destroy all anti-personnel mines in mined areas and their plans, including financial and technical requirements, as soon as possible.

Let us be clear. Any such communication does not obviate the requirement for continued and heightened efforts towards meeting Article 5 targets. It would, however, focus on the need for detailed and strategic information management and realistic planning to deal with a country's explosive contamination.

Furthermore, in pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals, the disarmament and humanitarian imperatives of the Mine Ban Treaty need to be operationalised in a balanced manner, with each other, and with other development challenges to give priority to life-saving and livelihood enhancing efforts. With this logic, all development needs should be incorporated in a comprehensive national plan, thus requiring an integrated approach, bringing mine action into the broader development and poverty-reducing frameworks.

To conclude, Mr. Co-Chair, it is therefore not sufficient to manage a mine problem on a day-to-day basis; States Parties must also find the most *appropriate* time-bound and permanent solution to it as outlined by the Mine Ban Treaty. Non-affected State Parties and the international community must work together with affected countries in a transparent and integrated fashion to acquire the necessary field data and information, conduct thorough analysis and prepare comprehensive plans, which include, if necessary, the possible anticipation of an extension request.

Work beyond treaty deadlines must be explained in a wider development context, prioritized and to the point, including the benchmarks, resources and time required to finish the job.

Given the UN's institutional presence in virtually all mine affected countries and territories, and the mine action support it currently provides to 23 mine-affected States Parties and 13 other mine affected countries and areas, the UN is well situated to assist this process. We look forward to constructive and realistic planning and implementation of mine action with affected country authorities with the full support of operators, donors and all other stakeholders. I would like to convey our continued commitment in placing our mine action capacities and capabilities to the disposal of the suggested process for planning, communicating and finalizing Article 5 obligations.

Thank you for your attention.