

Presentations by ICBL on States Parties that were granted an extension to their Article 5 deadlines by the Ninth Meeting of States Parties

Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Mine Action Technologies

27 May 2009

Thank you Co-Chairs.

We would like to congratulate States Parties on their ongoing demining work. As we have heard, most of the States Parties who were granted an extension at the last Meeting of States Parties have made meaningful progress since then.

Certainly there should be no let-up in efforts to meet Article 5 obligations as soon as possible, particularly by any affected State Party that is granted additional time to complete clearance obligations. Quite the contrary. We believe that by contributing resources—funding, equipment, personnel and expertise—and by embracing and implementing appropriate land release policies, affected States Parties can fulfil their Article 5 obligations as soon as possible. As part of land release procedures, mechanical demining equipment can be a valuable component of the demining toolbox, as Croatia and Ecuador have demonstrated.

As the Co-Chairs noted in their excellent introduction to this session, the obligation upon affected States Parties to identify mined areas under their jurisdiction or control should be a priority for every good demining program. In this regard, we are seeking clarification from Chad on when their new survey will be completed. We would also like to ask how contamination in the Tibesti region of the country will be addressed.

On the issue of funding, we would like to reiterate our call for continued financial support to affected States Parties. We would like to make a particular call to donors to support the mine action programme in Zimbabwe, which needs international support to conduct its technical survey and the accompanying clearance. In addition, while it is clear that funding allocated in national budgets is both essential and very welcome, this does not necessarily equate to cash in hand for the programme. At least two States Parties granted an extension have found this can potentially impede the implementation of their demining programme.

Funding for clearance and survey is a major concern, but of arguably equal importance is the quality of management of demining programmes. Effective, realistic planning is integral to such management. Thus, we wonder whether Bosnia and Herzegovina will be able to treble its clearance output in 2009 compared to 2008, in line with its proposal in its extension request. Thailand has pledged to increase clearance output to 45km² a year, but was only able to clear about 1.5km² in a six-month period since the last Meeting of States Parties.

We have a number of specific comments and questions we would like to add.

First, whatever the merits of granting a five-year period of extension to Venezuela, the fact that it did not start demining operations before the expiry of its 10-year deadline for clearance of antipersonnel mines does not serve the interests of the Convention as a whole and we reiterate our call for Venezuela to start clearance as soon as possible.

Second, we would like to commend Jordan for securing agreement that it can clear mines along its northern border even though the border issue itself may not have been resolved. There are other States Parties that have disputed borders and we encourage them to follow Jordan's example.

Third, we are pleased to hear that Senegal is employing land release principles in its demining programme. Given that several suspected mined areas have been cleared or surveyed without any contamination being found, these principles will help to speed up productivity in the affected Casamance region.

Finally, we would like to ask Nicaragua whether it will be able to meet its extension deadline of 1 May 2010 even if it does not receive the international funding it has been seeking.