

Meeting of the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Mine Action Technologies  
Statement by Norway  
27 May 2009

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Thank you.

First of all let me thank the Co-Chairs and the States Parties who were granted extensions of their Article 5 deadlines for their updated information provided to us today.

When the Convention was negotiated in 1997 it was not envisaged that many states would need to apply for an extension of their Article 5 deadlines. The provision was included as an exceptional provision for some of the most heavily affected states, for whom ten years would not be sufficient to fulfil their obligations to clear all mined areas because of the sheer enormity of the task. Some states parties indeed do have good and justifiable reasons for applying for extensions.

However, for many States Parties, delayed compliance with Article 5 obligations is a result of too little effort, too little resources, and too little political will. In some cases, it is not quite clear what the real reasons for not reaching their deadlines are. Further there seems to have been too much focus on the deadline itself and too little focus on the obligation to clear all mined areas as soon as possible. We also need to acknowledge that while mine clearance has evolved impressively over the past decade we still spend too many resources on actions that do not result in identification and clearance of mined areas.

The main obligation of Article 5 is to clear all mined areas *as soon as possible*. This obligation remains valid for all States Parties who are currently implementing Article 5, including those who have already been granted extensions. The humanitarian objectives of the Convention and its aim to prevent new victims demand that we focus our attention towards speedy completion of Article 5 obligations.

We must be ambitious! I say "we" because achieving the humanitarian objectives of the Convention is of course a joint responsibility of all States Parties. Cooperation and assistance must be provided, building on national priorities and national ownership. Increased cost-effectiveness of mine clearance and new methodologies to achieve more rapid release of land are crucial to our joint efforts, and we must be even better at making use of these. Applying an integrated gender perspective to mine action, wherever relevant, will also contribute to better results and more effective use of resources.

Again, we urge States Parties to focus on their obligation to clear mined areas as soon as possible, regardless of whether or not an extension has already been granted or an extension request is being prepared. We also urge States Parties to continue reporting in a transparent and thorough way on progress according to their national plans for completing Article 5 obligations, and according to decisions made regarding the various extension requests at the 9MSP.

Thank you.