

BELGIUM

Mine clearance

APMBC – 2024 Intersessional meetings - June 2024

M. President,

Newly laid antipersonnel mines, including improvised explosive devices, continue to have an indiscriminate and long-lasting effect on the civilian populations as well as impede socio-economic development and the return of displaced populations. Belgium remains therefore concerned about new contaminations in countries such as Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Myanmar, Ukraine as well as in the Sahel.

Belgium wishes to express its support towards the States Parties that are making every effort possible to complete their mine clearance operations, to bring us closer to the fulfilment of a world free of anti-personnel mines. Significant progress has been made in the implementation of the Oslo Action Plan in that regard, and we must redouble our efforts to meet the challenges that remain.

However, these last years, we have witnessed an important decrease of the funding in mine action, while the challenges faced by affected States Parties remain important. Belgium therefore welcomes the reflection around synergies between both Committees within our Convention, as well as enhancing the dialogue with expert organizations.

The Article 5 extension request mechanism is of great importance to our convention. It should however remain an exceptional tool and it is paramount to assess its process and adequation to the current state-of-play. We unfortunately have witnessed an increase in repeated extensions, missed deadlines, delayed implementation and non-implementation of commitments. My delegation regrets that only a few States Parties are expected to meet their article 5 deadline. The number of the expected extension requests for the next few years is consequently very high and will be a challenge for the upcoming Article 5 Committee.

Affected States Parties invest a lot of resources and efforts into the extension requests they submit. My delegation values the level of commitment that teams on the ground have in order for affected States to meet their deadline. In-depth analysis of the extension requests submitted pays tribute to this commitment.

This process however takes time, taking into account various meetings with relevant stakeholders, analysis of the extension request, potential feedback to the requesting State Party and final drafting of the analysis. Belgium fears that such a process currently in place will soon become unsustainable taking into account the upcoming years where there's likely to be 14 to 15 extension requests submitted.

Innovative solutions to address this practical issue are therefore needed. The creation of an informal Article 5 support group could be a suitable and flexible solution and has Belgium's support. Additionally, increasing the membership of the Committee on an ad hoc yearly basis,

based on a yearly assessment of the workload that is expected for the Committee could also be a path worth to explore.

I thank you Mr. President.