

ICBL Statement on Clearance

Mine Ban Treaty Intersessional Meetings, Geneva, 18-20 June 2024

Thank you, Mr. President,

The ICBL thanks all affected States Parties who provided updates on their implementation of Art. 5 and shared openly about their challenges and future plans. We also thank the Committee on Art. 5 Implementation and the ISU for their ongoing efforts to support States Parties in fulfilling their obligations.

Firstly, we would like to warmly welcome the announcement by Oman that is on track to finish its clearance by its deadline, and we look forward to celebrating its formal declaration of completion at the 5th Review Conference in Siem Reap. This is an excellent news that we wish to hear much more regularly at our meetings.

Despite some significant progress in some countries over the past years, the outlook for meeting the aspirational goal agreed by States Parties at the Third Review Conference in June 2014 in Maputo and reconfirmed at the Oslo Review Conference in 2019, “to clear all mined areas as soon as possible, to the fullest extent possible by 2025,” is now unfortunately out of reach.

However, it is never too late to do all we can, to make that extra push that the aspirational goal was meant to inspire. The ICBL continues to urge all states and partners to re-double their efforts to achieve completion as soon as possible. We would all be delighted to welcome more significant achievements in clearance when we gather in Siem Reap later this year.

Making greater progress clearly depends on each country’s circumstances, but in almost all cases there are touch points where increased efforts could make a clear difference, such as increased support for national capacity; high level political commitment to address sticky issues, such as contamination along borders or near military installations; adoption of the latest standards and land release methodologies; and better coordination among donors or new funding sources to ensure all in need receive support. One particularly inspiring and symbolic example would be for Cambodia and Thailand to be able to announce specific steps they are taking to collaborate on the clearance of their common border, and we are pleased to hear positive news along those lines.

Today, at least 33 States Parties remain contaminated by antipersonnel mines, eight of which are massively contaminated with over 100km² of contamination, 11 with large or medium scale contamination, and the rest with small or unknown amounts. An additional 10 States Parties may have contamination from improvised mines, but they have yet to clarify if the contamination involves victim-activated devices that must be declared under Article 5.

We are concerned that completion rate has significantly dropped in the past 10 years. While 11 states finished completion in the 5 years between the 2nd and 3rd Review Conferences, only 4 States Parties were able to do so in the 10 years between the 3rd and 5th Review Conferences. No country, apart from Oman, is on track to meet its deadline by 2025, and very few are on track to meet current post-2025 deadlines.

We are deeply concerned that as reported by the Monitor, some two-thirds of States Parties with Art. 5 obligations continue to report very little progress year after year, clearing less than 1km² per year, not undertaking any clearance at all, or not reporting on any activities.

As we know, many affected States Parties have relatively small areas of contamination and should have been able to complete clearance long ago. With clear national completion plans in place and adequate resources provided, most could become mine-free in a relatively short period of time.

Mr./Madam Chair, **if we continue as we have, we cannot expect different results.** Without immediate and major changes to Art. 5 implementation, the vast majority of currently affected States Parties will not declare completion of Article 5 for years, if not decades to come. This undermines the credibility of the treaty and continues posing a threat to affected communities.

As suggested in the Article 5 Committee's 21MSP paper, it is now time to consider new ideas for adoption at the Review Conference that would help regain the much needed momentum. Such ideas should both promote good planning and more efficient operations, while ensuring good efforts are matched with needed funding.

The ICBL has several concrete proposals that we believe could help remedy the present situation. We will present them in more detail later today and tomorrow, but our ideas include:

First, reinforcing the requirement for **clear national completion strategies and costed work plans** currently included in Oslo Action Plan, with implications for requests submitted without them. It should also propose consequences when they are lacking. It is critical to break away from the practice of extending clearance deadlines without solid work plans for clearance and risk education in place.

Secondly, better funding allocation and donor coordination is urgently needed to ensure that funds are channeled to all affected states parties with quality plans and requests, including those with smaller amounts of contamination. The ICBL supports consideration of a '**completion fund**' (or other such mechanism) that can provide short-term funding for often neglected countries help achieve completion. **Country coalitions** could also provide useful opportunities for the affected country, its donors, and other in-country partner to speak honestly to each other about challenges, and face them head on.

Thirdly, we should consider appointment of a **High-Level Envoy** on Art.5 (a model that has been successfully used for universalization) to engage at senior governmental levels to raise awareness and promote national ownership and prioritization of clearance obligations within national budgets and structures.

Lastly, the massive and complex workload under Art. 5 would greatly benefit from the input of a broader group with more diverse capacity and expertise. For example, the Article 5 Committee could be supported through an **informal Art. 5 support group** that would bring together key interested donors and experts (similar to the universalization coordination group that supports the work of the President) to facilitate more in-depth country by country engagement, better expert input, and to help ensure funding for good plans and requests.

These are some of our concrete proposals on how to address current alarming trends and bring Art. 5 implementation back on track. We look forward to discussing these and other proposals with all partners and stakeholders with the aim of concrete decisions adopted in Siem Reap.

We need to act boldly and urgently to uphold the integrity of the convention and ensure it remains a mode for others, **but most importantly, for the safety and well-being of populations at risk.**

Thank you.