

President's Summary of the Coordinating Committee Retreat March 13, 2002

Introduction

The President's Action Programme of the Third Meeting of the States Parties noted that: *"In order to sustain and enhance the contribution of the Intersessional programme of work to the implementation of the Convention, the Coordinating Committee will consider further improvements to the format and timing of the Standing Committee meetings and means to ensure the development of action-oriented Standing Committee Programmes" and that "the Coordinating Committee will consider the role that the Implementation Support Unit could play in supporting the Standing Committees and enhancing the effectiveness of Intersessional Programme of work."*

In this context, on March 13, 2002, members of the Coordinating Committee and representatives of the ICBL and ICRC, in their personal capacities, spent a day in an informal retreat-style setting giving wide-ranging consideration to possible enhancements to the Intersessional Programme. The retreat was organized around three broad topics: refocusing attention on the purpose of the Intersessional Programme; revisiting the relationship between the purpose of the Intersessional Programme and types of topics discussed at Standing Committee meetings; and, how to assure that the various topics are dealt with by the Standing Committees in a way that best serves the purpose of the Intersessional Work Programme.

The intended results of the retreat were two-fold: (a) To identify ways to immediately enhance the Standing Committee meetings in May; and, (b) To generate ideas on the future of the Intersessional Programme which could serve as the basis for discussion by all States Parties and others at the next meeting of the Standing Committee on General Status and Operation of the Convention.

This document is the President's descriptive summary of the discussions that took place during the retreat and is intended to make the main elements of these informal discussions known to all interested parties.

I. The underlying purpose of the Intersessional Programme

Many reiterated that the rationale for the establishment of the Intersessional Programme in 1999 is still important today. For example, many described the purpose of the Programme using phrases such as:

- To ensure the systematic, effective implementation of the Convention through a more regularized programme of work;
- To engage a broad international community in advancing the achievement of the humanitarian objectives of the Convention;
- To facilitate in-depth considerations of mine action issues by all interested parties at meetings which complement and build upon each other in a structured and systematic way; and,
- To organize the work within the framework of the Convention in a way which promotes continuity, openness, transparency, inclusiveness and a cooperative spirit.

When asked why at this point in time the Intersessional Programme is important, statements such as the following were made:

- To measure and monitor progress;
- To maintain a focus on the Convention between Meetings of the States Parties;
- To serve as both a “meeting place” of people and a “market place” for lessons-learned.
- To prepare for with Meetings of the States Parties;

While it was considered that the Intersessional Programme has been successful to date in serving as a means to raise awareness and reach common understanding on diverse issues, as well as to share information on broad means available to address the landmine problem, many felt that at this stage in the life of the Convention and of the Intersessional Programme, a greater emphasis should be placed on those areas of implementation where measurable progress is possible and necessary, in particular the core humanitarian objectives of the Convention.

Concerning areas of implementation where measurable progress may be most significant, ideas for a vision in 2004 included:

- significant strides made in universalization;
- a high degree of success in implementation of matters that have “hard” deadlines attached to them (i.e., deadlines for destroying stocks and clearing mined areas);
- the process will have become “repoliticized” (i.e., the need to address the landmine problem remains an important policy and political objective); and,
- focus would remain on the humanitarian objectives of the Convention.

Ideas for a vision for 2009 included:

- celebrate the successful implementation of Article 4 and Article 5;
- remain focused on the needs of victims; and,
- the Convention would be the accepted universal norm concerning AP mines – with a deeply rooted commitment, to ensure its ongoing promise is fulfilled.

It was noted that the Intersessional Programme’s contribution to this vision was to address the most pertinent questions or problems in a flexible and adaptable way and that the Programme could constantly be reshaped to meet the changing challenges in a cooperative spirit.

II. The relationship between the underlying purpose of the Intersessional Programme and what is discussed at Standing Committee meetings:

In reflecting upon the purpose of the Intersessional Programme and its ongoing value, focusing on the Convention’s humanitarian aims and the implementation of the specific provisions related to these aims was considered appropriate. Some of the ideas that emerged included placing a greater emphasis on affected States Parties with respect to their plans and needs for assistance and on donors State Parties with respect to their intentions and information needs. In sum, it was felt that States Parties should be more involved in the meetings through presentations and active discussions.

Other ideas that emerged were related to bringing greater coherence to the Programme, in part by minimizing diverse approaches taken by different Standing Committees. It was suggested that the Standing Committee on the General Status and Operation of the Convention could help provide this coherence. Greater coherence could also come through overview presentations of key areas of implementation and on universalization.

With respect to what could be discussed in relationship to the various Standing Committees, some of the ideas that emerged included:

- a. Mine clearance:
 - Focus on implementation of specific Convention articles
 - Assess needs and national plans, as well as long-term donor commitments
 - Discuss what constitutes cleared land
 - Thematic discussions as warranted
- b. Victim assistance:
 - Assess needs and national plans, in part by engaging national health care officials
 - Ensure the process does not attempt to duplicate what happens elsewhere
 - Focus on ensuring discussions are relevant to the audience
- c. Stockpile destruction:
 - Focus on ensuring full implementation
 - Continue the practice of country reports
 - As necessary, discussions on technology and best practices
- d. General status and operation:
 - Discuss matters in such a way that informality and openness is retained
 - Discuss the general status of cooperation and assistance, as well as “set the tone” by presenting an overview of implementation.

Finally, there was a general agreement that the issue of international cooperation should be given greater consideration during the Standing Committee meetings.

III. Reassessing how various topics are dealt with by Standing Committees

A number of ideas were raised related to how to enhance the operations of the Intersessional Programme. These ideas included the following:

- a. Ensuring continuity:
 - The long-term implementation needs should be identified in order to consider how the Intersessional Programme could contribute to meeting these objectives.
 - Goals and priorities should be defined and an action programme established.
 - The ISU could be used to support the need for continuity.
- b. Ensuring better preparations:
 - Well developed agendas and other documents should be distributed to States Parties and others well in advance of meetings in order to provide participants with the necessary means to prepare.
 - Co-Chairs should think of key questions that should be addressed and ensure that these are provided to meeting participants.
 - Briefings could be held to highlight key items on the agendas and to provide an orientation to new meeting participants.
 - Efforts should be made to ensure that presentations and interventions are of a reasonable length and presented in a way that is interesting to participants.
- c. Maintaining relevancy
 - There should be more “state ownership.”
 - The approach should focus more on the Convention and should be common to the committees that deal with mine clearance, victim assistance and stockpile destruction.
 - There should be greater coherence between the work of all the committees.
 - Perhaps smaller, more focused parallel meetings on specific subjects of interest to certain participants could take place.

- d. Reporting on work undertaken
 - Reports from one meeting should flow to the next and ultimately into the President's Action Programme.
 - Current reporting practices should be assessed (e.g., to consider possible improvements in the format of the final reports and whether steps should be taken to translate reports).
- e. Time allocation and sequencing:
 - The Standing Committee on the General Status and Operation of the Convention could use more time, perhaps to provide greater coherence to the entire week, maybe by beginning the week, as well as allowing more time for discussing various issues;
 - Other changes to time allocation and sequencing could take place. Changes, though, should be based on need and should be evolutionary in nature.
 - The flexible nature of the Intersessional Programme should be taken advantage of in the future in order to make time and sequencing adjustments as necessary.

Next Steps:

The Presidency indicated that it would consolidate the ideas raised at the retreat for review and consideration at subsequent Coordinating Committee meetings. In addition, the Presidency indicated that it would work with the Coordinating Committee to draft a non-paper, which could be used at the May Standing Committee meetings as the basis for stimulating discussion and input from all States Parties and others on the future of the Intersessional Programme.

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