

**Notes for ICRC intervention to the
Standing Committee on Mine Clearance
under the agenda item**

Updates by States Parties that have submitted requests in 2010

Tuesday, 22 June 2010

The success of the Mine Ban Convention depends to a large extent on managing clearance deadlines in a way which maintains the credibility of the convention and creates maximum pressure for completion within a realistic, well planned and adequately funded extension period.

With regard to the **Mauritanian** extension request, the ICRC would like to note the following

- **First**, in its extension request, Mauritania highlights the fact that the rate of demining was very low until 2006, leaving Mauritania only 5 years to complete its Article 5 obligations. Lack of available funds, both from Mauritania and external donors, has hampered progress in the last few years and led Mauritania to ask for an extension of its clearance deadline of 5 years.

The initial land impact survey found that an area of about 76 square Km was contaminated, not only with AP mines but also AV mines and other explosive remnants of war. For the purpose of the implementation of article 5 under the Mine Ban Convention, Mauritania concentrated mainly on the 35 square km of land contaminated with anti-personnel landmines. To this area, one must also add the 52 square km of land recently given back to Mauritania by Morocco, which contains both AV and AP mines. The initial total amount of contaminated area under article 5 of the convention reached therefore 87 square km.

From a purely conventional point of view, Mauritania is only obliged under this convention to clear land contaminated with AP mines. However, from a humanitarian point of view, we would like to express our concern that even less clearance has taken place of land contaminated with AV and other explosive remnants of war. We understand from Mauritania, that these other areas will be cleared at a later stage, after the fulfilment of its article 5 obligations but would like to recall that this extensive portion of land (almost 40 square km) poses a constant threat to the civilian population. From a humanitarian perspective, prioritisation of demining efforts should be made on the basis of the humanitarian impact of the contaminated land and the risk undertaken by the civilian population and not only on the basis of legal obligations to clear contaminated land.

- **Secondly**, we were alarmed to read on page 15 of Mauritania's extension request, that only around 15 km square of contaminated land has been marked. Article 5.2 of the convention requires States to make every effort to ensure that all AP mines are perimeters marked, monitored and protected by fencing or other means to ensure the effective exclusion of civilians until all AP mines contained therein have been destroyed. We would encourage the analyzing group to engage Mauritania on this point. We understand from Mauritania that all contaminated land close to the civilian population

has been marked and the rest will follow depending on available funds. The fulfilment of article 5.2 of the convention is indeed a critical obligation under the convention. The exclusion of the civilian population from all contaminated areas should be prioritised and undertaken as soon as funds are available to Mauritania.

- **Finally**, with regard to funding, we note that the total amount of funds spent in the last 10 years reached 8.7 Million US dollar, with only 3.2 million contributed by the international community. In its extension request, Mauritania foresees a very significant increase in the mine action budget. Compared to current level, this implies a doubling of the initial resources spent in the space of 5 years only (budget of 16 Million US dollar). It is notable that Mauritania plans to increase its own contribution significantly during this period and this should be welcomed by States Parties. The financial commitment of Mauritania should also be matched by States parties in a position to help.
- It is also clear from the extension request that there are very high expectations on donors-12 Million asked, 2/3 of the total budget. We are concerned as to whether these expectations will be met. No detail of secured funding is provided in the extension request, but we understand from Mauritania that Norwegian Peoples Aid conducted a recent field mission and might be prepared to clear the 52 square km zone of contaminated land just transferred by Morocco. Handicap International announced its continuing efforts to support victim assistance in the country. Other countries should announce their financial support but it is clear that the fulfilment by Mauritania of its demining plan in the next 5 years is highly dependant on the involvement and expertise of external organisations and the necessity to secure international funds. If States Parties grant the extension request based on these assumptions, we also believe they should share some responsibility in ensuring that the plans can be implemented.