

ICBL Comments on Extension Requests
10th Meeting of the States Parties of the Mine Ban Treaty
30 November 2010



The ICBL would like to make a few general points about the extension requests and the process for reviewing them. As of this week, 22 States Parties have requested an extension, three of them for a second time. As the ICBL and others have said many times, such a large number of extension requests is surely not what was intended when states agreed to include a provision for extensions in the Mine Ban Treaty, and surely not in line with Article 5's requirement to act "as soon as possible" to identify and clear all mined areas.

The reason we return to this message time and again is not just because of our concern that states live up to their treaty obligations, but because of our concern about the impact such delays have on the everyday lives people living in those 22 states. We believe there is a clear link between a rigorous process for submitting and reviewing extension requests and concrete progress on the ground. The questions, comments, and analysis coming from States Parties should prompt mine-affected states to plan better, act more efficiently and effectively, and finish the job in the shortest possible timeframe.

But for this process to work we need those States Parties seeking additional time to submit their requests with sufficient time for them to be carefully considered. At the 7MSP States Parties agreed that draft requests should be submitted no fewer than 9 months before the decisions on them would be taken. This year only Colombia did so, with the last request coming from Chad only in September. In addition, we need ALL States Parties, including all members of the "analyzing group," to take seriously their treaty obligation to assess and decide on extension requests. The feedback they give to requesting states can – and has in several cases – helped to improve plans, clarify challenges, and even reduce the amount of time planned to finish clearance.

The ICBL also contributes to this process by preparing comments on the requests, which we have sent to the Analysing Group earlier in the year and we have distributed to you at lunch. Overall, we were pleased that almost all of the requesting states are seeking a fairly short extension period, which is in line with the duty to act as quickly as possible. At the same time, three of these states are seeking a second extension, and two of those will need yet another extension after this one. We find most worrisome that after ten years of implementation, all six of these states needed – either now or in their original extension requests - more time to identify mined areas, which is the first essential step in complying with Article 5. While locating mined areas can be more challenging in some states than others, the mine action community has the expertise to do accomplish this task, and the provisions of Article 6 were designed to ensure such support can be given.