

12th Meeting of the States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty
ICBL Statement on Completion Declarations
4 December 2012



Thank you Mr. President.

We heartily congratulate the five countries announcing completion today for the hard work they have put into clearing their land of antipersonnel mines. Each country had its unique set of challenges, and each showed a strong commitment to addressing those challenges ahead of their extended deadlines.

We now seem to be entering a period where more and more statements of completion will be made. This is a wonderful development. At the same time, such declarations may be raising new issues to address as a mine action community and we encourage open discussion on them. For example, states must balance their efforts to finish on time with the need to anticipate whether additional time should be requested.

Uganda had confidence that it would meet its extended deadline of 1 August, but unfortunately this deadline was not met. In previous meetings we have expressed concerns that slipping deadlines may erode the credibility of the treaty. So while we urge all states to do their utmost to meet their treaty deadline, we recommend that they take the precaution of requesting a short extension if there's a risk it cannot be done on time. Ultimately states should remember that deadlines are just not mere targets -- they are legal obligations that reflect a state's commitment to its own people and to the international community.

This being said, we welcome Uganda's transparency effort since August and we appreciate that detailed monthly reports on progress were shared with the Presidency, the Implementation Support Unit, and civil society.

In addition, we are concerned to learn from Jordan's statement of completion that the ongoing "verification" operations have ended up identifying over 1000 mines so far. As Jordan notes, this means that mined areas remain which must be surveyed and cleared in accordance with Jordan's treaty obligations. We welcome Jordan's commitment to do so as a matter of urgent priority and, if necessary, to use the procedure on newly discovered mined areas that is being considered this week. We also appreciate Jordan's transparency about this ongoing work and applaud Jordan's thoroughness in conducting this verification out of a concern for the safety of its population.

At the same time, we would suggest to States Parties that find themselves in a situation where suspected mined areas still may exist to wait before declaring completion. Again we recognize states' desire to meet their deadline, but we would prefer to see states ask for additional time to stay in line with treaty obligations.

So in sum, Mr. President, we would again like to salute the hard work each of the countries speaking today has demonstrated, and we encourage their continued transparency and diligence in the event that additional mined areas are encountered.