

**Seventh Meeting of the States Parties to the
Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines
Geneva, 18-22 September 2006**

ICRC Statement on Mine Clearance

Tuesday 19 September 2006

Thank you Madam President.

On behalf of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), we wish to record our heartfelt congratulations to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for having declared, yesterday at this Meeting of the States Parties, completion of its Article 5 obligation, this well before its deadline, and for having done so in a very detailed and comprehensive manner.

In particular, we note that the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has declared completion using the terminology of Article 5, in a manner similar to that proposed in the paper presented by Guatemala for the consideration and decision of this Meeting for the States Parties. This is crucial to promoting clarity and consistency in the manner in which States Parties report completion in accordance with Article 5, and we commend the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for setting an example in this regard, as did Guatemala earlier this year both in its Article 7 report and at the May Standing Committee meetings.

We also would like to thank all those States Parties that have taken the floor to report on the status of their mine clearance programmes and the progress they are making towards reaching completion of the task of destroying all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under their jurisdiction or control as required by Article 5. The comprehensive and focussed nature of the statements that have been made is evidence of the seriousness with which these States Parties are taking their Convention obligations, and the seriousness with which this Meeting of the States Parties is taking its role of monitoring compliance with Article 5.

We note that most of the States Parties that have spoken have indicated that they will, or are making best efforts to, meet their Article 5 deadlines, but many of these have indicated that they will not be able to do so solely with their own resources and are in need of external assistance. We urge all States Parties in a position to provide such assistance to heed this call.

We note with concern that some States Parties that have taken the floor have not clearly indicated whether they are working to meet their Article 5 deadline, although they do not have the significant resource constraints of other mine-affected States Parties.

A final remark on this point: we find it very regrettable that some States Parties with deadlines in 2009 have not taken the floor to present the status of their mine clearance work.

Madam President, we now wish to briefly address the documents that have been tabled for the consideration of the Meeting of the States Parties this week, namely your paper "Towards the full implementation of Article 5", Canada's proposed template for requests for Article 5 deadline extensions, and Guatemala's proposed standard declaration of completion. These conference documents contain very clear and practical proposals for ensuring the full implementation of Article 5. We will have more to say about these proposals in the session Wednesday afternoon when they will be discussed in more detail.

However, we wish to emphasise from the outset that in our view it is very important for the Convention that a process, a template and a declaration such as those under consideration be adopted at this Meeting of the States Parties by the end of this week. While States Parties may feel the need to make adjustments to what is proposed in the documents, we would expect States Parties to work on such adjustments in the coming days and to be in a position to agree on a process, a template and a declaration by Friday.

As we emphasised in our opening statement, the clock is ticking. We are only two and a half years away from the first mine clearance deadlines. There is therefore a degree of urgency for this Meeting of the States Parties to decide on the matters before it, with the aim of ensuring the full implementation of Article 5 and ultimately a world free of anti-personnel mines.

Thank you.