

**Eighth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention  
on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and  
Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction**

**Dead Sea, Jordan  
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**Statement by  
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Check against delivery

It is of great significance that the Eighth Meeting of the States Parties is being held in Jordan and for the first time in the Middle East, a region whose people have suffered greatly and continue to suffer from the effects of landmines. Indeed, the vast majority of countries in the Middle East and North Africa are affected by anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war.

One does not have to travel far to encounter mines and to witness the toll they take in lost limbs, fractured lives and the loss of productive land. The border between the Red Sea and the shores of the Dead Sea has been mined. In neighbouring Iraq, mines and explosive remnants of war from successive conflicts have killed and injured thousands of men, women and children. Conflicts in Lebanon have left a terrible legacy of minefields and cluster munitions which severely affect civilians and agricultural production. Further south, Kuwait reported having cleared over 1.5 million mines following the 1991 conflict there. The staff of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and of the National Societies with which we work, have witnessed the human face of the suffering in this region for decades through our support for medical facilities and fifteen physical rehabilitation centres in five countries of this region.

But hope for a better future is also being born in the Middle East and North Africa, with the exemplary role in mine action being played by Jordan, the two most recent ratifications of the Mine Ban Convention by Kuwait and Iraq and the ongoing implementation of the Convention by Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania, Qatar and Yemen. The ICRC would like to congratulate these countries for the steps they have taken to protect their population from past and future landmine contamination and for the inspiration they have provided to others to do the same.

In adopting this Convention ten years ago, States rallied around the simple idea it embodies: that weapons which keep on killing long after the end of hostilities, must be stopped. Unprecedented efforts by civil society, diplomats, military officers and government officials have led 10 years later to the historic success of the Mine Ban Convention. With 155 States Parties, over 40 million stockpiled mines destroyed, many thousands of hectares of fertile land cleared and given back to communities and tens of thousands of landmine survivors helped to regain mobility and confidence this treaty has been a resounding success. But these achievements must not lull us into a false sense of complacency.

In the coming two years the Convention faces some of the most serious challenges to date. These challenges must be faced collectively and cannot be passed on to future Meetings of States Parties. Plans must be put in place this week to address them.

The **central challenge** facing States Parties is contained in Action 27 of the Nairobi Action Plan which commits you to ensure that, 'few, if any' States Parties will feel compelled to request an extension of time to meet their clearance obligations under article 5 of the treaty. During the Intersessional meetings last April, we witnessed with deep concern that out of the 24 States Parties that have clearance deadlines in 2009 and 2010 and spoke at that meeting, 15 indicated they will definitely or probably ask for an extension of time to meet their obligation. These included some which had not yet completed surveys or established national mine action plans. It has long been understood that some of the most mine affected countries would, despite their best efforts, require an extension. But it would be damaging to the Convention if most States, including those with a clearance problem of limited scale, could not meet their obligation within ten years. Most importantly, we must understand that every day during which the Convention's deadline is not met is a day in which civilians are put at risk. Extensions will most likely be measured in lost limbs, lost lives and lost livelihoods.

The success of the Mine Ban Convention will be judged by history on the basis of our capacity to manage clearance deadlines in a way which maintains the credibility of the convention and creates maximum pressure for completion before the deadline or within a realistic, well planned and adequately funded extension period. We must also recognise that an extension request

reflects problems by a State Party in meeting its commitments under the Convention. It is essential that the process of making and examining an extension request identifies the problems which have been encountered and ensures that they are adequately addressed by the requesting State with the type of collective support from others which has been the hallmark of this Convention.

We would also like to stress that extension periods should only be granted for the minimum period necessary to carry out a well prepared and financially viable clearance plan. No extension request should be made or, if made, approved if the delay in clearance would constitute a *de facto* use of anti-personnel mines through a failure to clear them.

A **second major challenge** is ensuring that the virtually perfect record of compliance with the stockpile destruction obligations of the Convention is maintained. Based on what is currently known, we can expect in 2008 to learn that one of the largest stockpilers of anti-personnel mines among States Parties will fail to meet its stockpile destruction deadline and might be unable to foresee when this crucial obligation will be met. This would be a major blemish on the record of the Convention and could set a very bad precedent. The ICRC calls on all States Parties, and particularly those which are directly involved, to address and resolve this situation as a matter of great urgency.

Coming to a **third great challenge**, I would begin by saying that the ICRC is encouraged by the increasingly focussed and nationally based work which has been done by States under the Co-Chairs for Victim Assistance Austria and Sudan and their predecessors with the support of the Implementation Support Unit of the GICHD. We are also grateful for the generous support of many States Parties for the ICRC's worldwide work in this field. However, in most affected countries we are still far from seeing the type of benefits which landmine survivors feel they could expect from this landmark Convention whose preamble promises "to put an end" to the suffering caused by anti-personnel landmines. This suffering includes not only the physical pain of the injury but also the exclusion from many professional and social opportunities experienced by people with disabilities. It is of the utmost importance that States Parties with large numbers of mine victims have in place comprehensive national plans to achieve tangible improvements in the services available to mine victims and other persons with disabilities. We must persistently increase our efforts in this field for it is an essential part of the promise of this Convention.

The last point we would underline is that success in meeting most of these challenges is intrinsically linked to the mobilisation of sufficient financial resources. While "mainstreaming" mine action into existing humanitarian and development budgets and programmes is a worthy approach, it must result in real increases in funding, commensurate with mine clearance and victim assistance needs. It should be noted that annual funding for mine action worldwide -- estimated at some 475 million US dollars in 2006 -- is a modest sum when compared to the scale of the problem and to the socio-economic damage caused by landmines. Without a significant increase in human, technical and financial resources from all States Parties many mine-affected States Parties are unlikely to meet their deadlines and in many contexts the suffering of mine victims and survivors will not be alleviated.

The major challenges I have described in no way diminish the extraordinary achievements of this Convention. Indeed the accomplishments of the past ten years should inspire us to rise to the challenges we now face. What we have achieved together was based on a daring vision, on a willingness to challenge one another to do more than seemed possible and on constantly keeping the terrible human suffering caused by anti-personnel mines at the centre of our efforts. The coming two years will be crucial to ensuring that the promises of this Convention are fulfilled. Our work here and in the months ahead must ensure that they are.