

Mine Ban Convention

8th Meeting of the States Parties, 18-22 November 2007, Jordan

Item 11 (c) Clearing mined areas

Co-Chairs' summary remarks

Ingunn Vatne

Thank you.

Your Royal Highness, Mr. President,

On behalf of Norway and Chile, outgoing Co-Chairs of the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Mine Action Technologies, I would like to offer a few concluding remarks on what we have learned during the last days in our discussions under Item 11 (c) Clearing mined areas, and on the way forward before handing over to the incoming Co-Chairs, Canada and Peru.

During our discussions, we have heard a number of mine-affected States Parties provide an update as to the status of the implementation of Article V obligations. We have also heard a number of other States Parties provide an update on international cooperation and assistance for mine clearance, and comments on the extension process. Additionally, we have heard NGOs and international organisations present their views.

Let me first, again, congratulate Swaziland with its achievement, and thank Swaziland for setting such a good example as to reporting on its fulfillment of Article V obligations. What Swaziland has done and presented to us shows the importance of focusing on the possibilities that the land release concept provides. Also other mine-affected States Parties and other States Parties have discussed land release in their statements and presentations, and we hope to see this issue further developed in the time to come.

The debate has been rich and interesting, with many detailed presentations, and we are pleased that many are focusing their statements according to the questionnaire provided. Many States Parties have provided us with good updates clarifying where they are in the process of fulfilling Article V obligations, and what factors are influencing progress, ranging from vegetation, climate, lack of funding, political difficulties, to armed internal conflict. We

have learned about the variety of challenges that States Parties face. Several States Parties have ensured us that they intend to fulfill their Article V obligations within set deadlines, and we commend their efforts to reach this goal. Many have indicated that they will need to ask for an extension of the deadline to fulfill Article V obligations. We are glad to see that many States Parties are already relating to and making full use of the opportunities that the agreed process for extension requests provide. We are particularly pleased that some States Parties have indicated that even though they will have to ask for an extension, they will ask for a shorter extension than the Convention provides for, based on realistic and ambitious assumptions. We are also glad to learn that many, as we are approaching the first deadlines, are redoubling their efforts and reinvigorating their work so as to come as far as possible before the deadline passes.

We would like to commend States Parties for their openness and transparency in this regard. This contributes to preserving the credibility of the Convention. A good understanding of the problems States Parties face is essential when donors make their priorities. As we heard from many States Parties during this debate, resource needs are still great.

On the other hand, some States Parties are still unclear as to whether they will be able to complete their obligations within the set deadlines, or whether they would need to request an extension. In addition, we have also heard the use of words that are not contained in the Convention, such as mine-free, impact-free or mine-safe, even if to a lesser degree than before. We would like to urge States Parties to do their utmost to ensure a speedy implementation of the Convention's obligations, and to ensure that the agreed procedures for applying for an extension – if needed – are followed, within the set timeframes.

I believe there is widespread agreement that in the coming years, the handling of extension requests will be most important. The credibility of the Convention is at stake, and the way we collectively meet this challenge, will be crucial for the way the Convention is perceived by the world. We need to be practical, flexible, open and transparent. We must preserve the cooperative atmosphere of the Convention; between mine-affected and other countries; between states and civil society. And we must keep our focus clear to reach our final goal: A world free of the scourge of anti-personnel mines.

Finally, Mr. President, let me on behalf of Norway and Chile again thank all colleagues for the good cooperation we have had, with both the previous and the current President, and in the Coordinating Committee.

On behalf of Norway and Chile, we wish Canada and Peru all the best as they take on the co-chairmanship of the Standing Committee on Mine Clearance, Mine Risk Education and Mine Action Technologies, and would like to ensure you that we will be available for discussing anything that might come up. Thank you for your efforts and cooperation as co-rapporteurs.

On our own behalf, Norway would like to thank Chile for an excellent cooperation during these two years as co-rapporteurs and co-chairs, and to wish Chile good luck when you take on yet another office under the Convention, clearly demonstrating the strength of Chile's commitment to the humanitarian goal of our work.

Thank you.