

Reviewing the Intersessional Work Programme

President of the Second Review Conference and Chair of the Coordinating Committee

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In 1999, the States Parties established the Intersessional Work Programme to ensure the systematic, effective implementation of the Convention through a more regularized programme of work.

The programme's objectives were:

- to “engage a broad international community for the purpose of advancing the achievement of the humanitarian objectives of the Convention”;
- to “facilitate in-depth considerations of mine action issues by all interested parties at meetings which complement and build upon each other in a structured and systematic way”; and,
- “to organize the work within the framework of the Convention in a way which promotes continuity, openness, transparency, inclusiveness and a cooperative spirit.”

Between the 1MSP and the 2MSP, five “Standing Committees of Experts” each met twice.

At the 2MSP, five Standing Committees of Experts became four Standing Committees. In addition, the Coordinating Committee was established to better coordinate the Intersessional Work Programme and ensure a sound relationship between it and the Convention's formal meetings.

At the 3MSP, the topic of “mine risk education” was moved from the Standing Committee dealing with victim assistance to the one dealing with mine clearance.

At the 4MSP, the States Parties reflected on how the Intersessional Work Programme was contributing to the effective implementation of the Convention and how it could further contribute from that point forward.

At the 4MSP, the States Parties acknowledged the ongoing importance of the principles that had contributed to an effective work programme.

While the 4MSP reaffirmed that the purpose of and principles underlying the Intersessional Work Programme were as relevant as when the programme was established, it was agreed that the Intersessional Work Programme would be recalibrated.

In particular, it was agreed that the Intersessional Work Programme should “focus with greater clarity on those areas most directly related to the core humanitarian objectives of the Convention” – universalisation, stockpile destruction, mine clearance and victim assistance.

Moreover, while noting the Convention's unique spirit of partnership, the 4MSP highlighted that “the responsibility of implementing the Convention rests with States Parties” and that “therefore, a greater emphasis should be placed on hearing from States parties with respect to their plans and needs for assistance.”

This recalibration, however, did not include a change to the committee structure.

At the First Review Conference, the approach to intersessional work agreed to in 2002 was left untouched, with the only significant change being that the number of meetings per year per Standing Committee was reduced from two to one.

In Cartagena, it was agreed that the Coordinating Committee would review the operation of the Intersessional Work Programme, presenting a report and, if necessary, recommendations to the 10MSP.

The Coordinating Committee has discussed this matter to some degree at each of its four meetings this year.

On the basis of these discussions, I would conclude that there is widespread appreciation that the 2002 recalibration of the Intersessional Work Programme succeeded in ensuring that the work of the Convention has focused with greater precision on the pursuit of core aims.

States Parties in the process of fulfilling key obligations have been provided with the space to share their problems, plans, progress and priorities for assistance.

The result has been greater clarity on and more precise knowledge of the status of the implementation of the Convention.

With a clear focus on the pursuit of objectives that flow from the provisions of the Convention itself, successive Co-Chairs have truly ensured continuity in their efforts.

Since 2002, meetings of the Standing Committees have not been stand-alone episodes but rather have served as milestones in a process ultimately leading to the realisation of the Convention's promise.

Moreover, Co-Chairs have seen that their responsibilities to facilitate progress in implementation are not limited to simply chairing a single meeting but rather span the entire year of their respective terms.

The other principles embedded into the Intersessional Work Programme from the start also have continued to have been essential.

Successful Coordinating Committees have ensured coherence and effective preparations, and, have been flexible in allocating time and sequencing meetings.

In addition, the informal nature of the process and the strength of partnership between States Parties and other actors have contributed greatly to the ongoing value of the Intersessional Work Programme.

In addition to confirming that the principles agreed to in 1999 remain valid, Coordinating Committee participants suggested that two other principles have been and should continue to be important for a successful Intersessional Work Programme.

These principles are transparency and inclusion.

With respect to inclusion, I would remark that it is fundamentally important in this Convention – as in any other domain – that both women and men, including women and men with disabilities, have the opportunity to participate actively.

I would conclude that we consider that the Intersessional Work Programme has functioned well since its recalibration in 2002 and that the principles on which it was founded in 1999 continue to be important.

Nevertheless, we have also remarked that the implementation process has evolved in recent years.

We have gained a lot since 2002 by the meetings primarily focusing on national contexts, in large part by providing the space for individual States to update us on their progress they're making and for us to engage in a dialogue with them

Given how full the room was yesterday for the national updates on victim assistance and on Tuesday and Wednesday for the updates on mine clearance, I trust that there is widespread appreciation for this focus on national contexts.

In our discussions within the Coordinating Committee, the ICRC has proposed other ways that we can focus attention on national contexts.

I would remark that there is general appreciation for assisting States in overcoming challenges that are specific to them.

Some have remarked, however, that this is best done not in Geneva but within affected countries themselves, where all relevant actors are present.

In addition, while appreciation has been expressed for new ideas, some concerns have been raised.

In particular, it is important that we don't deviate from those principles that make this process special and productive:

- While we must continue to ensure that inclusivity of this process.

That is, we need to ensure that all relevant actors can take part in discussions on the pursuit of the Convention's core aims.

And this week again demonstrated that a wide range and large number of actors are interested in and wish to be involved in all aspects of our work.

- In addition, we must ensure that this remains a uniquely cooperative and collegial process, and that adjustments to our work programme – if any – do not see us take on characteristics that would diminish this cooperative spirit.

As we continue our deliberations on the operation of the Intersessional Work Programme, some key matters that we must think about are as follows:

- First: National implementation of Article 4 is at this point a matter for only four States Parties. However, there are some serious concerns regarding the destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines, including the current situation of non-compliance. Therefore, how should the matter of stockpile destruction continue to be dealt with?

- Second: Given, the fact that the States Parties have emphasised the ongoing importance of cooperation and assistance in ensuring that the promise of the Convention is realised, how should we deal with this matter in the context of our work programme?
- Third: That the meeting programme of the Mine Ban Convention takes into account other meetings and events of relevance to States Parties.

Let me conclude by saying that when the Coordinating Committee was mandated with reviewing the Intersessional Work Programme, we were instructed to consult widely in doing so.

Therefore, I greatly look forward to your views on my update and your thoughts on ensuring the ongoing effective operation of the Intersessional Work Programme.