Notes for ICRC intervention on
« Special Session on International Cooperation and Assistance: Clearance»

MBT Intersessional Week
June 25th, 2010

Although the ICRC has only recently developed operational capacity for clearance of mines and other forms of weapon contamination, we have more than 15 years of experience working hand-in-hand with clearance operators and national mine action centres. Our work and that of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies on incident data collection, risk reduction and victim assistance is intrinsically linked with, and helps sets priorities for clearance in many affected countries. As a result, we are acutely aware of how resources mobilization and national ownership can save lives and dramatically affect the quality of tens of thousands of lives in affected communities.

At this point in the life of the Mine Ban Convention it has become abundantly clear that its continued success and the future fulfillment of its promise to mine-affected communities depends almost entirely on the mobilisation and effective use of resources for clearance and victim assistance at national and international levels. The need for this special session and for a future forum under the Convention to address the issue of resources as a continuous priority is illustrated by three sobering facts:

- First, 19 affected States Parties with deadlines in 2009 and 2010 have needed to required extensions of their clearance deadlines. All four States Parties with deadlines in 2011 have or are expected to request extensions. Most cited the lack of resources as an important or central factor. This is far too many. In human terms it means that thousands of communities and tens of thousands of people will remain at risk for years or decades.

- Second, many of the extension requests that have been granted contain plans for clearance that assume a doubling or tripling of national and resources in order to be implemented. Without the urgent identification and mobilisation of these resources additional extensions will be required. If such requests continue to represent a high percentage of affected States Parties the credbilitiy of the Convention's commitments will be put into question.

- Third, as States and regional funders grapple with the current financial crisis competition for resources to meet article 5 obligations will increase. Resources available for clearance can be expected to decrease unless vigorous strategies for both mobilisation and utilisation of resources are put in place urgently.

Although States Parties have long recognised through Article 6 of the Convention and the work of informal contact groups that resources were an essential element of the Convention's success, the efforts deployed have not proven adequate and have not always added up to a coherent or comprehensive approach. Continuing along these lines is not a recipe for success.

In the view of the ICRC there are a number of issues that need to be addressed in future work of States Parties on the issue of resources. In response to the President's request to comment on the list of questions presented to these meeting

we would like to affirm that all of her questions are pertinent and add a few of our own which we believe need to be addressed. These include the following:

- What are the expectations of affected States Parties as regards their national ownership and planning for clearance in accordance with article 5 obligations? Where the capacity for effective national planning and implementation does not exist or is inadquate how can the development of such capacity be supported?

- Should the focus on national capacity building be reduced and the available funds put into the rapid short term clearance of mined areas?

- What strategies have been succesfully implemented to increase political commitment, national ownership and clearance funding in specific national contexts?

- How can benchmarks for resource mobilisation and utilisation be more effectively established and monitored for States that have received extensions of article 5 deadlines so as to minimise the number of second requests?

- In light of the decreased level of clearance resources available in recent years, should the approach of mainstreaming clearance funding into development or other funding mechanisms be maintained or encouraged in the future? Should State and regional donors re-establish mechanisms for dedicated funding for clearance of mines, cluster munitions and other ERW?

- What are the expectations of donors in terms of their provision of information on how to access clearance funding, reporting on resources provided and medium or long-term resource commitments to ensure the Convention's success?

- To what extent can land release methods substitute for clearance and on the basis of which methodology can such methods be safely promoted?

Madame Chair, the discussions here today have highlighted the urgency of addressing the issue of resources with the same degree of focus and consistency as has been brought to bear as regards the positive action commitments of the Convention in the fields of clearance, stockpile destruction and victim assistance. To achieve this the ICRC supports, and urges States to support, the proposal for a new Standing Committee on Resources made by Zambia at last year's PrepCom and at the Cartagena Summit. Such a forum could begin addressing the issues which have been identified here today and help ensure that all issues relevant to ensuring that the resources essential to the Convention's success are addressed consistently and coherently. It would also help ensure that information on how to access and best utilise existing resources is available in an accessible and timely manner. In keeping with this Convention's tradition of adapting its structures to meet its challenges we hope that a decision to establish such a Standing Committee will be taken at the 10th Meeting of States Parties this November.