AGENDA ITEM: ARTICLE 5 - IRAQ

Comments on Iraq's Mine Clearance Deadline Extension Request
Intersessional Meeting of the Mine Ban Treaty
8 June 2017

Thank you Mr Chair.

This is Iraq's first extension request and the authorities have made a laudable effort to prepare a request offering an overview of the current situation and existing challenges. Antipersonnel landmines have been used on a large scale in recent years, in the form of victim-activated improvised explosive devices planted by a non-state armed group – causing tremendous suffering among the civilian population. Insecurity also hampers access to contaminated areas in some cases.

The request – in its current format – unfortunately does not include a detailed plan for future survey and clearance. The total expected clearance falls far short of the total estimated contaminated area, and no plan is presented for survey. The work plan does not appear to include the areas that are currently inaccessible due to security reasons, although these will be among the highest humanitarian priority areas.

Iraq is requesting ten years, which is understandable due to the magnitude of contamination and security challenges. However we do not believe that any state should be granted ten years without presenting a detailed plan. As has been done for other States Parties in the past, we recommend that Iraq be granted only the amount of time necessary to prepare a plan, explaining *what type of work* will be carried by *which organizations* in *which governorates*, and providing detailed *timelines and costs*. A shorter extension period would enable Iraq to better assess the scale of contamination once it is possible to access areas that are currently inaccessible, before presenting a long-term plan.

Among the positive points:

- The request disaggregates past results, explaining whether land was released through non-technical survey, technical survey or clearance. It also includes a commitment to continue using the land release methodology.

- It shows that Iraq contributed substantial national funding to its own mine action program in the past.
- It makes a specific call for support and capacity building for a range of national actors.
- And, it provides details of the socio-economic impact of contamination.

Among the points requiring improvement:

- Clarity is needed on how the estimated size of contamination was reached, in which governorates this contamination is situated, and the geographical locations where contamination is as yet unrecorded.
- The request lacks a resource mobilization strategy that would tackle both the emergency clearance of recently laid improvised mines and the longer-term work of clearing legacy minefields.
- Iraq should explain how it will lift obstacles for mine clearance operators on issues such as accreditation, the import and registration of vehicles and equipment, access to reliable or consolidated data, and official sign-offs for land release.
- The authorities should take steps to improve coordination between bodies in charge of mine action, to foster exchanges of expertise and to ensure continuity in leadership.

In closing, Mr Chair, a general point applicable beyond the context of Iraq: we wish to recall that improvised explosive devices – or IEDs – designed to be activated by a person and placed under, on or near the ground *are antipersonnel mines* and are covered by the scope of Article 5.

Thank you.