



ICRC

Nineteenth Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention The Hague, 15-19 November 2021

International Committee of the Red Cross Statement on mine clearance and risk education and reduction

At the outset, the ICRC commends the Committee on Article 5 Implementation and the Convention's Implementation Support Unit for their work with diligence and thoroughness.

Today 33 States Parties remain contaminated by anti-personnel mines. While no State declared completion of mine clearance obligations since the last Meeting of the States Parties, 7 States have requested for extension of their Article 5 deadlines to this Meeting. In this respect, Actions # 23 and 24 of the Oslo Action Plan require States Parties requesting extensions to include detailed, multi-year and costed plans both for clearance and for mine risk education. Yet a number of the extension requests received since the fourth Review Conference did not include such information as required. Furthermore, according to the report *Clearing the Mines 2021* as well as two discussion papers on *Implementation of Article 5 of the Mine Ban Treaty* and on *Analysis of (81) Article 5 Extensions* published earlier this year, some of the States Parties with outstanding clearance obligations have not conducted any clearance activities for years, or established the baselines of contamination through survey.

In the ICRC's view, this is not a satisfactory level of implementation and calls for urgent, concerted action by affected States, States Parties and organisations in a position to assist them. We welcome the attention paid to this issue and proposals made by Switzerland, Austria and others. In its statement on mine clearance and risk education and reduction at the Intersessional Meetings this past June, the ICRC has proposed concrete action points to be taken to ensure the vigorous implementation of the Oslo Action Plan. We encourage all States and other stakeholders to refer to these proposals and remain available for further discussion and support.

Mr. President,

Allow me to reiterate the critical importance of implementing mine risk education and reduction activities in line with Section VI of the Oslo Action Plan, in view of the indispensable role these activities play in protecting civilians from the risks posed by landmines pending their clearance.

In this respect, in 2020 the ICRC carried out initiatives to address the threat posed by weapon contamination in 48 countries or contexts. Much of the ICRC's work focuses on developing the capacity of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to work alongside national

authorities that carry out mine-action work domestically. National Societies are often in a good position to work with local communities, gather data and conduct risk awareness and safer behaviour interventions, especially in areas that may be difficult for other organizations to access. In Syria, for example, 12 teams of staff and volunteers of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent Society, trained by the ICRC, have been working in heavily contaminated areas such as Aleppo, Idlib, Hama and Hassakeh.

The ICRC also helps national mine action authorities strengthen their ability to undertake humanitarian mine and explosive remnants of war clearance and risk reduction measures in accordance with international standards, and provides blast trauma care training for health personnel and first responders during an explosive ordnance assessment or disposal operation.

The ICRC has also enhanced its efforts on data collection and data management in mine affected countries in order to support evidence-based decision-making and priority setting in weapon contamination programmes. In 2020 and 2021, the ICRC has rolled out programmes through the introduction of standardized data collection forms as well as tools, software and support in 10 countries or contexts, and plans to expand this programme to three more countries in 2022.

Lastly, as was outlined in the ICRC Vice-President's opening speech, mine action must "do no harm" to the communities and areas where contamination exists, which includes mitigating any adverse environmental impacts of mine clearance operations. We welcome the increasing discussion on this subject, in particular the recent publication of a policy brief titled *Mitigating the Environmental Impacts of Explosive Ordnance and Land Release* by the Mine Action Review. This issue was also addressed in the ICRC's *Guidelines on the Protection of the Natural Environment in Armed Conflict* (rules 24 and 25) published in 2020. In this respect, the mine action sector can draw on practical guidance from the International Mine Action Standard on *Environmental Management in Mine Action*.

In conclusion, the ICRC urges States Parties to take all necessary measures to ensure that the deadlines set out in Article 5 and the extension request process be followed, with the aim of achieving a world free of anti-personnel mines as soon as possible and to reinforce risk education and reduction measures in the meantime.

Thank you.