



**19th Meeting of States Parties to the  
Convention on the Prohibition of Antipersonnel Landmines  
(The Hague, 15-19 November 2021)**

Statement  
of the  
**International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**

**Marieke van Schaik**  
Secretary General of the Netherlands Red Cross

**Agenda item 10b – Clearing Mined Areas and Mine Risk Reduction  
17 November 2021**

---

Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies, and gentlemen,

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), on behalf of its member National Societies in 192 countries, is grateful for the opportunity to address this Meeting of States that have committed themselves in the Convention's preamble to "put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines". Too many of our National Societies see the effects of these horrific weapons daily and work tirelessly to promote risk reduction and safer behavior while also assisting the victims - both at the time of their accidents and in the many years of rehabilitation and reintegration that follow.

After 22 years of implementation, it should concern us all that landmine casualties remain so high, with over 7,000 casualties reported by Landmine Monitor in 2020, roughly half of which were in States Parties to this Convention. These casualties were in large part fueled by the use of improvised anti-personnel (AP) mines, which have doubled reported casualties from a low in 2013. Ending the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines requires stopping this still endless cycle of suffering, shattered limbs and broken lives.

The Convention has been highly successful in ending the use of AP mines by State Parties and in ensuring the destruction of stockpiles. Nevertheless, it has a far less impressive track record in ensuring delivery of the only two interventions that can prevent suffering from mines already in the ground: mine risk education and mine clearance. For years, planning for mine risk education was far less detailed and less well-resourced than clearance, with many States saying little about their plans in this field. And to date some 39 States Parties have received 81 extensions of their clearance deadlines. Only 12 of these have gone on to complete their clearance obligations. The 27 States Parties with outstanding clearance obligations have collectively been granted 283 years of extensions and most, according to Mine Action Review, are not on track to meet their current deadlines. A recent report by the ICBL points to some 26,000 mine casualties that have occurred in States Parties during their extended deadlines.

These disturbing trends were already recognized by the 2019 Oslo Review Conference. In its Action Points 23 and 24 the Oslo Action Plan committed States Parties requesting extensions to include detailed, multi-year and costed plans both for mine risk education and clearance. Yet most of the extension requests received and approved in 2020 did not include *such* information for clearance for the full period of extension, nor for mine risk education – education that is essential for the protection of people living in mine-affected communities. These deviations from commitments made in the Oslo Action Plan appear again in the requests submitted this year.

Although it is clear that some extensions of clearance deadlines reflect lack of access due to security conditions or lack of control of territory, many do not. It is hard to explain why, as highlighted by a recent analysis of extension requests, the average time accorded so far for clearance is nearly identical – namely 21 to 23 years – regardless of whether contamination in a State is massive, heavy, medium or light.

We urge this Meeting of States Parties to take steps to address and reverse these trends to ensure that the promises of the Convention to mine-affected communities are met. This would entail closer coordination between donors and affected countries to ensure that detailed, costed, multiyear plans for clearance and mine risk education are presented and fully funded. But it also should entail re-establishing the “analysis group” with involvement of relevant organisations and operators and the Convention’s Committee on International Cooperation and Assistance in the analysis of extension requests to help ensure that the analysis and decisions are based on the commitments contained in Actions 23 and 24 of the Oslo Review Conference and are coordinated with resource mobilization efforts.

A review of the process of extension request, analysis and decision-making, that was last done in 2011, should also be launched by this meeting with a mandate to put forward proposals for supporting and speeding up article 5 implementation and to produce guidelines for the extension request, analysis and decision-making process based on Actions 23 and 24 of the Oslo Action Plan for consideration by the 20th Meeting of States Parties.

Our Movement is ready to do its part in supporting implementation of the Oslo Action Plan in its areas of expertise. We are also prepared to work with States facing new contamination or making future extension requests to help them prepare the type of detailed risk reduction programs to which the Oslo Action Plan commits affected States.

At this point in the life of the Convention, and in light of the challenges we’ve highlighted, we also believe it is time for reinvigorating the commitment of all States Parties to ensure that your collective commitment to “put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines” results in the completion of clearance in all States Parties. The Convention’s moral authority depends on this and its legal provisions require such action. But most importantly, the lives of countless people in mine affected communities depend on it.