



20th Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

Geneva, 21-25 November 2022

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

Statement on mine clearance and risk education

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.

We congratulate States Parties for having released some 132 square kilometres of land through mine clearance last year, according to the Landmine Monitor 2022 Report. Despite this achievement, the year 2021 recorded less land release than the previous year, and 12 States Parties with outstanding clearance obligations reported or recorded no progress in clearance, according to the Mine Action Review 2022 Report. We are concerned that, 25 years after the Convention's adoption, 34 States Parties remain contaminated by anti-personnel mines, and many are not fully on track to meet their clearance deadlines, and will likely request extensions in the coming years.

We wish to underscore the importance of accelerating the implementation of mine clearance and risk education obligations, in view of the important humanitarian implications on people in mine-affected communities. In our view, strengthening the Article 5 extension request process is key to achieving this goal. In this regard, we welcome the "Reflections on the implementation of mine clearance obligations of States Parties and the Article 5 Extension Process" paper submitted by Belgium, on the basis of its experience as President of the Committee on Article 5 Implementation. Building on recommendations in the paper and further to the final report of the 19th Meeting of the States Parties, we strongly encourage States Parties to take actions towards strengthening the Article 5 extension request process and adherence to the relevant actions of the Oslo Action Plan.

In particular, increased national ownership as well as in-country coordination between national mine action authorities, donors and international and national demining actors must be strengthened, according to Action 43 of the Oslo Action Plan. Affected States are encouraged to establish an appropriate national platform for regular dialogue among all stakeholders, which can serve as a useful forum to discuss extension requests and match necessary resources

from the earliest possible stage of the process. it would be highly desirable for the Convention's machinery to involve relevant international and civil society organizations and operational partners throughout the process, including by establishing an ad hoc informal extension request subgroup, as suggested in the Belgium paper.

Mr. President,

Allow me to reiterate the critical importance of implementing mine risk education and reduction activities, 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 2022 the ICRC is carrying out initiatives to address the threat posed by weapon contamination in up to 50 countries and/or territories, including, in many contexts, activities implemented by National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. National Societies conduct risk awareness and safer behaviour training and activities, data collection and information management, with technical and financial support from the ICRC. Most of the ICRC's risk awareness and safer behaviour activities were adapted to continue disseminating these messages in areas highly affected by the presence of explosive hazards while following COVID-19 safety protocols, including the use of radio spots, animated videos, flyers, billboards and online tools.

The ICRC has also enhanced its efforts on data collection and data management in affected countries in order to support evidence-based decision-making and priority setting in weapon contamination programmes. Significant progress has been made in our work to standardize the collection of data related to weapon contamination. We are currently using several newly developed data templates in line with International Mine Action Standards in 18 contexts.

Furthermore, the ICRC attaches importance to the environmental impacts of mine action. We wish to underscore that mine action must "do no harm" to the communities and areas where contamination exists, which includes mitigating any adverse environmental impacts of clearance operations. For example, last month the ICRC organized an "Environmental Impact Management in Mine Action" workshop in the ASEAN region jointly with the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre. Our work aims at contributing to the development, integration and mainstreaming of environmental protection and impact mitigation in policies and practices of the mine sector.

To conclude, the ICRC, together with the broader International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, stand ready to support concerned States Parties and the Convention's machinery in stepping up efforts in accelerating the implementation of mine clearance and risk education obligations, including through strengthening the extension request process.

Thank you.