



Mine Action Review Statement on Clearance

Agenda Item 10b: Clearing mined areas and mine risk education and reduction: Conclusions and recommendations related to the mandate of the Committee on Article 5 Implementation

APMBC Twentieth Meeting of States Parties, 21–25 November 2022

Thank you, Mr. Chair and the Article 5 Committee for its hard work over the last year.

I am delivering this statement on behalf of Mine Action Review.

In 2021, a global total of more than 152 square kilometres of mined area was cleared, with the destruction of over 157,000 anti-personnel mines. While this represents a slight decrease on the amount cleared in 2020, it is nonetheless an impressive achievement, especially given the continued impact of COVID-19 in many countries.

Some 85% of recorded global anti-personnel mine clearance in 2021 was by States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention, which is a significant reduction from the equivalent 98% of the total in 2020. Large-scale clearance in 2021 in State not Party Azerbaijan, after it regained mined area during the 2020 conflict with Armenia, helped offset significant drops in clearance from States Parties Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Croatia.

Of the 34 mine-affected States Parties, only two were believed to be firmly on track to meet their respective treaty deadlines: Oman and Sri Lanka. Peru and Zimbabwe were still just on track to meet their deadlines, but with Zimbabwe's ability to meet its deadline largely contingent on securing sufficient funding. It remained unclear, whether Croatia would complete clearance by its extended Article 5 deadline of March 2026. The other affected States Parties were either not on track to fulfil Article 5 in time or were in violation of their obligations under the Convention. No clearance was recorded or reported for 2021 in 12 States Parties. These findings should raise concern, 25 years on from the adoption of the Mine Ban Convention and midway to the Fifth Review conference.

Mine Action Review welcomes the paper on '*Reflections on the implementation of mine clearance obligations of States Parties and the Article 5 Extension Process*', shared by Belgium, as chair of the Committee on Article 5 implementation.

The paper highlights some of the central requisites for extension requests, such as the fundamental importance of a work plan, and for shorter more accurate requests, submitted on time. The paper also makes some interesting suggestions, such as the creation of an ad hoc informal extension request subgroup. Such a subgroup could help make the Committee's engagement with expert organisations who comment on deadline extension requests more of a dialogue rather than one-way written input.

However, the reflections paper is heavily focused on the process *after* the initial Article 5 deadline extension requests have been submitted, and doesn't address how we could collectively better help support affected States elaborate stronger extension requests in the first place. There would be benefit in a review of the guidance that is given to States Parties by the ISU/Article 5 committee at the very start of the process, in order to see if it can be strengthened or simplified in terms of what is expected and what are the essential elements for requests. There could even be a template provided

for States Parties, to prompt inclusion of the essential elements, and an example of what a strong extension request looks like using a fictional country to illustrate. The better the quality of the extension requests submitted, the less work will be required by the Committee on Article 5 implementation and others when analysing and providing feedback on the requests.

Currently, there is only one extension request, that of Ukraine, due to be considered next year. This therefore means there should be time available for continued and dedicated collective discussions on the Article 5 extension request process at the 2023 Intersessional Meetings and at 21MSP. It is important that the discussions on this topic are continued next year, in order to address some of the challenges in the existing process before 2024 and 2025, when a large number of extension requests will be due to be considered. Based on current predictions, it is likely that at least 12 extension requests will be due for consideration in 2025, potentially more.

Article 5 implementation and the importance it holds for the success of implementation of the Convention, deserves our collective time and attention.

Thank you.