

Norwegian People's Aid Statement on

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

Twentieth Meeting of States Parties to the APMBC, 21-25 Nov 2022, Geneva

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Thank you Chair,

Primarily we would like to thank the distinguished delegate from Cambodia on the excellent news shared this morning and would like to welcome the agreement between Cambodia and Thailand on the border clearance. Lives indeed do come first and NPA stands ready to support the Article 5 completion efforts through our presence in both Cambodia and Thailand. Once again we applaud this truly exemplary cooperation effort and look forward to it being put into action.

The APMBC is one of the strongest humanitarian disarmament instruments, with Article 5 a core provision of the Treaty. As per the Mine Action Review 2022 Clearing the Mines report, during 2021 we have seen more than 152km² of mined areas cleared globally and to be returned to the affected communities for their safe and productive use. The global clearance output has been kept at a stable level compared to the previous year, with Cambodia, Croatia, and Afghanistan contributing the most to the clearance results as states parties. We should also recognise that an immense clearance work was done to by a non-state party, Azerbaijan, without which the global clearance output would have dropped, indicating the states parties to the Convention are not clearing on the same output level as in the previous years. Understanding that this may in-part be due to other challenges, such the Covid-19 pandemic we have been through, we would still like to encourage affected states parties, donors and operators to reflect on this downward trend to identify and address the factors impacting the clearance progress and improve operational efficiency under Article 5. We would also like to take this opportunity to commend Azerbaijan on its significant clearance efforts and further urge Azerbaijan to join the Convention Treaty as soon as possible to fully support the humanitarian disarmament agenda under this landmark Treaty.

Moreover, as this year marks the 25th anniversary of the Treaty, we should also reflect on the clearance achievements over time; since the Convention was signed, 33 states have declared their Article 5 completion. However, since we met last time at a meeting of States Parties, no new states have been able to fulfill their Article 5 obligations. Of the 34 states parties with mined areas, only 5 are on track or barely on track to meet their Article 5 deadlines. While 8 countries face massive or heavy landmine contamination, this is not the case for the majority of them, where contamination is medium or light. So what is the hinderance?

Primarily we must ask if every effort is being made to fulfill Article 5 obligations in all States Parties. We would like all parties present to take the matter of Zimbabwe's completion with grave consideration. As we have stated many times before, and repeat again in hope that the donor states in particular will hear us clearer this time and act on our words, Zimbabwe's Article 5 deadline is just around the corner at the end of 2025 and the only obstacle standing between the country and its

successful completion is quite simple – it is funding, or there lack of. While we must prioritise urgent humanitarian needs and understanding the world has been through years of various crisis, it is our duty under this Treaty to support countries cross the finish line. Funding cannot be diverted and countries which have been working hard to fulfill their Article 5 obligations cannot be abandoned. Zimbabwe has had an exemplary mine action programme, being the only country whose mine action programme performance was rated “Very Good” by the 2022 in the Clearing the Mines Report. Zimbabwe is ready: Zimbabwe continued to demonstrate strong national ownership and political will, destroying more than 26,000 landmines, which is the greatest number of anti personnel mines destroyed globally in 2021. All the ingredients for a successful completion are there but one – monetary means. We must not fail the Convention by turning away from Zimbabwe’s success as this not only unethical, but also sends a negative message to other affected states parties that no matter how hard they work, having strong national ownership and political will, they may be abandoned by the international community and left standing alone right in front of the finish line, unable to take that final step due to fully avoidable circumstances. NPA has been present in country for years, hereby reconfirming our engagement as an operator and urging all present donors to urgently commit the necessary resources to support Zimbabwe to cross the finish line as it deserves to.

Furthermore, 29 states were not on track to complete their Article 5 obligations in time. It is of particular importance to draw attention to those affected states parties in direct violation of the Convention, such as Eritrea. If states parties let such behaviour go unnoticed and without accountability, it seriously weakens the very heart of this Treaty, disregarding the norms it set and as such cannot be tolerated.

Finally, meaningful Article 5 fulfillment cannot be achieved without mainstreaming gender and diversity into mine action programmes. Mine Action Review’s monitoring of the Oslo Action Plan implementation shows only 47% of affected states parties have either a national workplan or a strategy that integrate gender and take the diverse needs and experiences of people in affected communities into account, under Action 3 of the Oslo Action Plan. This is not only substandard, but also worrying. If we do not apply a gender and diversity sensitive approach to mine action programming, it is inevitable that we will be consciously be leaving some affected people behind, thus not fully complying with Article 5 obligations and also further exacerbating their inequalities and contributing to further marginalisation of vulnerable groups.

As an Advisory Board Member of the Mine Action Review and a member of the Gender and Diversity Working Group, we align ourselves with their statements.

Thank you.