



Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
20 Meeting of the States Parties
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Statement on the Extension Request by Guinea Bissau

Statement by MAG

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Thank you, Mr President,

MAG welcomes the extension requests submitted this year. The requests demonstrate transparency and commitment to the implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, one of the most unique humanitarian disarmament treaties. We would like to provide some reflections on the request submitted by Guinea Bissau, as well as some general remarks.

We commend Guinea-Bissau for the submission of a detailed extension request, containing a good overview of the current state of play and an honest account of the challenges being faced by CAAMI. The request clearly conveys willingness to learn from the past to build a safer and better future.

MAG welcomes the clear path outlined in the request and the commitment shown by Guinea-Bissau to undertake preliminary steps towards clearance based on relevant evidence and properly managed information. The goals Guinea-Bissau outline are clear, as is how they intend to achieve them in line with IMAS and the Oslo Action Plan. This supports our own experience of working with Guinea Bissau over the past year where we have seen first-hand their commitment and national ownership.

We hope Guinea-Bissau's efforts will be recognised and matched with the international cooperation and assistance required to achieve its objectives. In this vein, we would like to take the opportunity to thank the Governments of the Netherlands and Norway for approving funds that will enable MAG to support Guinea-Bissau in making progress against their Article 5 obligations. However, much more is needed.

MAG is committed to working with Guinea Bissau and national partners to ensure a more sustainable approach to completion. We also believe that states like Guinea Bissau have important lessons to share with other States Parties, especially their neighbours and colleagues in West Africa, many of whom face the challenge of mine contamination for the first time.

We believe this sharing of experience and expertise is important for developing sustainable national capacities and should remain at the forefront of our minds. We encourage a focus on sub-regional cooperation, particularly where existing structures such as the Economic Community of West African States offer a ready-made framework for information-sharing and cooperation.

Mr President,

After 25 years of this Convention and 30 years of mine action, it is important we never forget three fundamental principles: transparency, national ownership, and the humanitarian imperative.

Acknowledging the finding of previously unknown contamination, making transparent requests for support, and detailing the steps and barriers to achieving the goals set by the Convention, as shown

by Guinea Bissau, is to be encouraged. Such detailed requests should be met with constructive and effective support by the community behind the Convention.

Sustainable national ownership is essential but cannot be achieved without patient and committed work. The international community must support the development of national mine action actors that are able to work with international partners to both achieve the goals set by the Convention and remain ready to face new challenges and risks.

It is essential we remember the humanitarian nature of the Convention and the broad contribution of mine action to the full enjoyment of human rights and sustainable development. Civilian protection should always be central. Localisation and national ownership build platforms for civilian voices and offer new ways of working with communities and those affected, including women and girls.

In reference to the working paper by Belgium on Article 5 submission, we believe there is significant value in improving the support to States Parties in preparing extension requests. There could be great benefit in closer cooperation between the Article 5 committee and in-country implementers, providing an entry point for dialogue and support.

In support of this, additional resources should be invested in the ISU, whose subject knowledge and relationships with States Parties is invaluable. We would like to thank them for their inclusive approach to civil society and ongoing partnership, and draw the attention of states to the commitment and expertise of its staff. Despite this invaluable work, they find themselves overstretched in responding to the requests received from states.

The proposal for a reposting template is welcome, though we would highlight the significant differences between contexts. We would especially highlight the possible challenges of tying international cooperation and assistance too closely to the "quality" of Article 5 requests. Objective criteria would be required for fairness and transparency and we must not discourage universalisation or reporting by states dealing with new contamination by setting a bar that does not accommodate the needs and challenges of all States.

Mr President,

Frank discussion, creative thinking, and political engagement are essential to make sure that our words and commitments are translated into concrete and effective action. Ultimately, it is this action that leads to the change we are working to achieve through the Convention, to realise a future where people and communities do not live at risk of harm from mine contamination.

Thank you, Mr President

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