

## ICBL statement on International Cooperation and Assistance

*Mine Ban Treaty Intersessional Meeting, Geneva, 19-21 June 2023*

---

Thank you Chair,

International cooperation and assistance have been one of the groundbreaking provisions of the treaty that underpins many of its successes to date – something we will all be proud of when we Finish the Job. However, until then we still have much crucial work to do.

It is important to remember that Assistance is a right and obligation. According to the treaty's Art. 6 "*each State Party has the right to seek and receive assistance*" and "*each State Party – in a position to do so – shall provide assistance.*"

It is an indispensable provision that enables fulfillment of all other key obligations under the treaty such as land clearance, risk education, victim assistance and stockpile destruction. It is, therefore, key that assistance remains at a high level, and ideally increases, to ensure ALL affected states and territories have access to needed resources to meet their obligations under the treaty.

The ICBL is concerned that the global support for mine action has been decreasing over the past four years and as reported by the Landmine Monitor last year, it dropped by 7% in 2021. We hope this worrying trend will be reversed, as the treaty's continued success depends upon it.

Effective provision of cooperation and assistance, that supports the goals of the convention, is not only a question of the levels of donor funding, however. Equally important is the question how the funding is *distributed, allocated and coordinated*.

According to the Monitor, the trend of the past two decades has been that the majority of international donors' funding has been going towards a small group of affected countries, favoring strongly those with massive and new contamination, leaving aside those with smaller and/or legacy contamination. There are 27 states with obligations to victims in their country. Only nine donors reported contributing to victim assistance projects in eight States Parties and six States Not yet Party. As many as nine affected States Parties did not receive external support to carry out clearance and/or risk education projects in 2021. The success of this treaty depends on meeting all needs and not leaving anyone behind.

Traditionally, clearance activities receive the most support. Whereas victim assistance is on the opposite end of that spectrum, and last year reached the lowest levels since 2016. This is very worrying. The number of those victimized by landmines are not decreasing nor should the levels of assistance to restore their rights and livelihoods.

As a community we need to do more and we need to do better in ensuring the assistance gets everywhere it is needed and as efficiently as possible supporting all the pillars of mine action.

Chair, I would like to conclude with a few practical recommendations on what States can do more and better to ensure assistance reaches all in need and effectively supports the implementation of all treaty obligations.

*Firstly*, affected states need to provide clear information on remaining challenges, the types of assistance and support needed, as well as, the level of their national contributions. Equally importantly, they need to develop *and* implement resource mobilization plans for completing their obligations. Too often affected states parties do not say how much they need and for what exactly.

*Secondly*, to donors: don't fund and forget. Direct engagement and close follow-up by donors with affected States that they support through funding, enhances national ownership, mine action programming and results, and respect for the treaty's deadlines. To give money, and not to engage, not to follow-up, is a missed opportunity. Donors have a critical responsibility in helping to write and complete success stories.

*Thirdly*, donor states still need to coordinate more closely among themselves in order to identify all gaps and to work together to cover them in the most efficient and effective manner possible. This would contribute to reaching a wider and more diverse range of countries with different levels of contamination, new and old, and for those with victim assistance obligations to provide services to survivors, affected families and communities. Donor funding decisions should aim to address both urgent humanitarian impacts, and timely completion of Art. 5 obligations by as many States Parties as possible.

Closely related to this - donors' funding decisions should also recognize and fund, complete, quality Art. 5 extension requests and work plans aimed at prompt completion. We cannot allow that a good plan and good effort goes without support!

Chair, this treaty has seen many successes to date. With continued strong, sustained, coordinated assistance applied to all pillars of mine action we can finish this story in our lifetime and create a legacy of which we can all be proud.

Thank you.