

Mine Ban Convention, III Review Conference. Maputo June 2014
Norway Statement on article 5 – clearance

Mr President

When we met for the First Review Conference in Nairobi in 2004, it was still five years until the first round of deadlines for complying with article 5.1. At that conference, all States Parties adopted the ambitious Nairobi Action Plan. Today it may be worthwhile to recall Action # 27, encouraging states to “...strive to ensure that few, if any, States Parties will feel compelled to request an extension in accordance with the procedure set out in Article 5, paragraphs 3-6 ...”.

As we now know, this did not happen. Since 2008, more than 30 states parties have requested extensions for various lengths of time. Some have been inevitable, due to the massive magnitude of the original contamination, as foreseen by Article 5.3. But a majority of the extension requests come as a result of a combination of factors not directly related to the actual mine problem, and often mutually reinforcing each other in a negative circle. It is also an unfortunate fact that the mine action sector itself has contributed to this problem, by using survey methods generating overblown estimates of suspected mined areas.

However, since the Second Review conference, the methods for identifying actual mined areas and subsequently releasing them through clearance or other accepted means have led to significant improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of mine clearance programs. The challenges are no longer technological or methodological, but mainly political and organisational.

It is only by applying political will and taking national ownership of both the mine problem and the means to solve it, that States with Article 5 obligations will be able to comply with their obligations within reasonable time-frames. And in an environment of reduced international support for mine clearance, demonstration of national leadership will be a competitive advantage.

According to the mine clearance organisations in the ICBL, as many as 24 states parties are fully capable of completing their clearance obligations by 2019.

Mined areas don't have to continue to be a threat to lives. Compliance with Article 5 is not just a legal issue, but also a rational response to a concrete problem with serious economic and humanitarian consequences. It is time to change tack and make it happen.

Thank you