ICBL calls for urgent action on mine clearance and victim assistance as Mine Ban Treaty meeting concludes at the Hague

(Geneva, 19 November 2021) – The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) voiced serious concern this week at the 19th Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty, over new landmine use, compliance with clearance and reporting obligations, assistance to victims, and progress in “universalizing” the Treaty. Urgent action is needed by all States Parties to address these serious concerns.

The meeting held 15-19 November and presided over by the Netherlands, was an opportunity for States Parties to take stock of progress on the five-year 2019 Oslo Action Plan, and discuss challenges and resources for meeting treaty obligations.

As a formal Treaty stakeholder, the ICBL delegation, counting landmine survivors, expressed alarm at high casualty rates and at recent use of antipersonnel mines – including those of an improvised nature – by the government of Myanmar and non-state armed groups in Afghanistan, Colombia, India, Myanmar, Nigeria, and Pakistan (see Landmine Monitor 2021).

The ICBL urged States to strongly condemn any use of mines, by anyone, and to do everything possible to put an end to use of this indiscriminate weapon.

Specific attention was called by the ICBL to the implementation of States’ clearance obligations and the prolonged, repeated and extensive delays in clearance by many States Parties. The lack of compliance with past decisions on extension requests and Oslo Action Plan clearance commitments contributes to further human suffering and puts the integrity of the Treaty in jeopardy. States, with the inclusion of all partners, need to rethink their collective work on land clearance and strengthen their efforts to live up to the aspirational mine-free goal of 2025.

The ICBL is also gravely concerned by Eritrea’s ongoing violation of Treaty obligations, and called on States to take concrete measures in accordance with Art. 8, to bring Eritrea back into compliance as soon as possible.

Only 14 States had victim assistance or relevant disability plans in place to address recognized needs and gaps, while 11 others have yet to put such plans into place, according to the Landmine Monitor 2021 Report.

Victims cannot wait, states must rapidly work to close the gaps and enable assistance to reach survivors, families of people injured and/or killed and affected communities in the most inclusive and efficient manner.

Regarding universalization of the Treaty, ICBL noted the 33 countries remaining outside of the framework, many of which hold large stockpiles. A concerted and renewed universalization effort is essential to bring these states on board and reach the finish line together.
ICBL and partners, through the Gender and Diversity Working Group, urged States to adopt gender and diversity responsive policies and programming in all areas of mine action, to ensure the Treaty is implemented in an inclusive manner that leaves no-one behind.

The meeting was also an opportunity to highlight the resilience and innovation of the mine action sector, in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and response measures. Examples include use of artificial intelligence in land release efforts; expanding use of digital technology for risk education and outreach; and capitalizing on 3D printing for prosthetics.

During the week, affected states also cited lack of available resources and the pandemic as key factors hindering progress in mine action in the past year. The need for sustained funding for all pillars of mine action remains critical, until the job is done.

This is the second year in a row that the Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty has been held in an online format. The ICBL recognizes the considerable work done by the Dutch Presidency to ensure continuity of the meeting, and also notes the major challenges posed in an online format, for interactivity and effective participation.

We acknowledge the moral deterrence that the Mine Ban Treaty has contributed to the elimination of landmines as weapons. Adding a legal dimension through treaty signature (accession) enriches the disarmament laws that keep us human.

The ICBL welcomes the incoming Treaty leadership by Colombia, and fervently hopes to join State delegates for an in person meeting in November 2022.

###Ends###

Links:

- Mine Ban Treaty - [www.apminebanconvention.org](http://www.apminebanconvention.org)
- ICBL Twitter - [twitter.com/minefreeworld](https://twitter.com/minefreeworld)
- ICBL Facebook - [facebook.com/pg/minefreeworld](http://facebook.com/pg/minefreeworld)
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