

## ICBL Statement on Clearance

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

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Thank you Chair,

The ICBL thanks all affected States Parties who provided updates on their implementation of Art. 5 and shared openly about their challenges and future plans. We also thank the Committee on Art. 5 and the ISU for their ongoing efforts to support States Parties in fulfilling their obligations.

While we were pleased to hear reports of some positive developments in land release recorded in some States Parties, we should all be deeply concerned about the overall slow pace of progress in land clearance in many affected States Parties.

No State Party reported completion of clearance in the past two years. Twenty-three States Parties have deadlines to meet their Article 5 obligations either before or during 2025, but only one - Zimbabwe - appears to be on track to meet its deadline, pending availability of funding. Beyond 2025, the picture is equally disturbing – only one more State Party – Sri Lanka - seems to be on track to meet its original deadline of 2028. We hope Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka will stay on course and will serve as an example for other affected states.

The aspirational goal agreed by States Parties at the Third Review Conference in June 2014 in Maputo, *“to clear all mined areas as soon as possible, to the fullest extent possible by 2025,”* now unfortunately appears to be unobtainable.

As reported by the Landmine Monitor last year, as many as eight States Parties with Article 5 clearance obligations undertook no clearance in 2021, and another eleven States Parties cleared less than 1 km<sup>2</sup>. This means that more than half of all States Parties with Art. 5 obligation did nothing or close to nothing in 2021 to respect the treaty’s obligation to clear contamination ‘as soon as possible.’ Unfortunately, this was not an exceptional year.

Without an immediate and profound change to Art. 5 implementation, the vast majority of currently affected States Parties will continue to request deadline extensions, prolonging completion of Article 5 for years and years to come.

Many affected States Parties have relatively small areas of contamination and should have been able to complete clearance long ago. With proper land release techniques in place and adequate

resources allocated, most could become mine-free in a relatively short period of time. It's worth recalling that land release should not be seen as simply outputs of square kilometers released, but as land returned to mine-affected populations as well, ensuring that the land released truly benefits people most impacted.

There is an urgent need to rethink the extension request process so that we regain the momentum needed to complete clearance as soon as possible and to ensure that states fully respect past extension decisions and the Oslo Action Plan commitments.

In this regard, we welcome the mandate of the Committee on Art. 5 implementation adopted at the 20MSP last year *“to assess the Article 5 extension request process and challenges (...) in an open, inclusive, and transparent manner (...) and to report its conclusions and recommendations at the Twenty-first Meeting of States Parties.”*

We want to thank the Chair of the Committee on Art. 5 Implementation for engaging in discussions on this matter with ICBL earlier this year and for presenting today the plan to fulfill the mandate by the 21<sup>st</sup> MSP.

Considering up to 22 deadline extension requests are expected in 2024 and 2025, in addition to the extra work related to the next Review Conference, this year presents the best opportunity to reflect on and address some of the ongoing challenges related to Art. 5.

We therefore warmly welcome the proposal for open-ended consultations on these matters to be held in September with all relevant and interested stakeholders, and we look forward to working in very close partnership with the Committee, States, the ISU, and other partners to achieve meaningful reflections and recommendations on the extension request process by the 21<sup>st</sup> MSP, that would ultimately advance completion of Art. 5 *“as soon as possible.”*

Thank you.