ICBL Statement on a post-Third Review Conference Program of Meetings
First Preparatory Meeting for the Maputo Review Conference
6 December 2013

The ICBL agrees that it is time to take a fresh look at the structure of Mine Ban Treaty meetings and the intersessional program of work, and we thank you for your paper to get the discussion started. At the same time, we agree with others who have said earlier today that the best way to do so is to first assess what we are trying to achieve, and then look at what might be done differently to best meet these goals.

The ICBL sees at least four major goals of the Mine Ban Treaty meetings and the work program:
1. To prepare and take formal treaty decisions (including on Article 5 extension requests and possible actions under Article 8)
2. To hold States Parties accountable to their treaty obligations through reporting and feedback
3. To provide an opportunity for states to highlight and discuss major issues of common concern, including slow progress and non-compliance.
4. To bring together the mine ban community for informal networking and exchanges of lessons learned and best practices

We believe the current program of work does meet these goals, though to varying degrees. It certainly could do a much better job of keeping the spotlight on states’ progress and holding meaningful discussions about common challenges.

We don’t share the view expressed in the President-Designate’s paper that the work of meetings on an international level often have “little relevance” to the work at the national level. The meetings are, on the contrary, intended to push for greater progress at the national level at a time when a large number of states are still actively implementing major treaty obligations. At the same time, in order for our work at the international or regional level to have a real impact national work, it will be essential to improve the quality of reporting by affected states and to have more engagement on progress – and challenges - by all states. With this in mind, we welcome some of the innovative ideas we heard this morning, such as Belgium and the ISU’s proposal to create a body to give meaningful feedback on Article 5 reports, and Canada’s proposal to establish a group to follow up on use allegations and other issues of compliance.

In terms of the specific proposal put forward by Mozambique, we think it could be interesting, but that there needs to be more reflection on how it would work in practice, and how it would contribute to improving reporting, oversight of states’ treaty implementation, and enabling quick and effective reaction in case of serious problems. For example, if a new vibrant system of regional and thematic meetings was established, it may have logistical and financial costs
that are even be heavier than the current system, which we clearly want to avoid. Or if the projected meetings did not in fact materialize, we would need to make sure that the benefits of the current system are not lost. Thinking through these scenarios, as well as a variety of others that could stem from this proposal, would be helpful before States Parties take a decision.

While more regular meetings certainly have their costs – financial and otherwise – it also helps keep this issue on states’ agenda throughout the year. Losing such focus may have an unintended impact on states political engagement and the importance the international community continues to attach to the landmine issue. Again, while keeping our minds open to new options, we need to ensure that we don’t create a system that downplays the importance of ongoing implementation work, especially when we will be simultaneously challenging states to increase their efforts to enable rapid completion.

In addition, though not addressed by Mozambique’s paper, we believe that it is important to keep the current system of standing committees with co-chairs, along with a coordinating committee, given the vital leadership that many of the states in these roles have brought to the convention over the years. Such active participation of a rotating group of states would be even more critical if the current standing committee meetings are replaced with thematic and regional ones.

In closing Mr. President, we truly welcome this challenge to reassess our working methods and seek real improvements to meet our goals for the coming years. But it seems we all need to reflect more on how best to do so. We have a fantastic community of creative minds, which will surely find good ideas as long as we keep our central goal in mind, which is to encourage states to move as quickly as possible toward completing their major treaty obligations and ridding the world of landmines once and for all.

Thank you.