Monday 28 November 2011

SUMMARY

Official Opening

The 10MSP President Gazmend Turdiu opened the meeting, recalling the ICBL’s important message at the 10MSP to “Keep up the Energy,” announcing that it was a privilege to push for progress, in cooperation with many states and organizations, during his time as leader of the Mine Ban Treaty.

Prak Sokhonn was elected President of the 11MSP, welcoming delegates of the Mine Ban Treaty back to Cambodia, where the movement began 20 years ago with NGOs drawing attention to the human tragedy caused by mines in Cambodia and around the world. He called for States Parties to assist each other in meeting challenges despite financial difficulties, reminding delegates that the Mine Ban Treaty has a human face which should keep States Parties focused on the importance of sustaining their efforts.

King Norodom Sihamoni of Cambodia delivered a special video message, expressing Cambodia’s support for universalization of the Mine Ban Treaty, and calling on delegates to use the 11MSP to report on progress, assess challenges and reaffirm commitment to treaty.

In keeping with tradition, the UN Secretary General, the ICBL, ICRC, and GICHD delivered messages at the opening of the MSP.

Jarmo Sareva UNODA Geneva Branch delivered a message on behalf of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, renewing a call to states not party to accede, denouncing the “intolerable” new use of mines, and citing the Mine Ban Treaty as an example of an effective partnership between states and civil society.

Sister Denise Coghlan delivered the message from the ICBL, reminding delegates that decisions made in the coming week will affect the lives and livelihoods of people, and calling on Cambodia to accede to the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Olivier Vodoz, Vice-President of the ICRC looked back to the time before the mine ban movement when mines were considered normal and necessary, thanking the ICBL for its role in allowing the vision of mine-free world to take hold. Despite hailing the progress made over the past two decades towards this goal, he warned against
complacency, urging all states to mobilize resources—human, financial and technical—for clearance and victim assistance.

Dr. Barbara Haering, President of GICHD, called for greater integration of mine action in development strategies as contamination has been shown to be an impediment to reaching the Millenium Development Goals, and reminded States Parties that a mine-free world is not a dream or goal, but a responsibility and commitment shared by all.

The 11MSP then got underway, with the election of nine Vice-Presidents (the Co-chairs of the standing committees in the previous year), and the confirmation of the MSP Secretary General Prum Sophakmonkol.

**General exchange of views**

Once the floor was opened for the General exchange of views, delegates heard from several high level delegates:

- **Burundi**’s Minister of Public Security, who declared Burundi officially mine-free, ahead of its stated deadline of April 2014,
- **Uganda**’s Minister of State for Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees, who announced that Uganda expected to fulfil clearance obligations by 2012, and offered to assist neighbouring countries with demining upon request,
- **Finland**’s Minister of International Development, who announced that Finland would accede to the Mine Ban Treaty in the coming weeks, and committed to fulfil all obligations as a State Party to the treaty, including the promotion of universalization.

**South Sudan, Mozambique, Albania, Tuvalu, Japan, Algeria, Thailand, Chile and Belgium** also made statements before the General exchange of views was suspended, to be resumed where time permits at the end of scheduled sessions in later days.

**South Sudan** and **Tuvalu** gave their first statements as State Parties. **South Sudan**’s detailed statement covered stockpile destruction, contamination, clearance and included a declaration that it does not possess facilities for mine production. **South Sudan** stated that it does not possess any stockpiles, but that it discovered small stockpiles in former Sudan Armed Forces camps vacated after separation which will be destroyed in the dry season of 2012; it stated that it does not retain any mines for training. **Tuvalu** stressed the need to clear lagoons of dumped WWII ordnance, and requested technical support in this task.

**Mozambique** stated that it remains committed to meeting its 2014 clearance deadline, describing efforts to increase efficiency of mine action program, including increasing mechanical capacity and applying land release methodologies.
Japan and Chile discussed several examples of South to South cooperation and expressed the hope that this type of cooperation could help increase efficiency.

Belgium, having taken over from Canada as coordinator of the Universalization Contact Group, applauded new states parties and the work of Prince Mired of Jordan, Special envoy on universalization, and welcomed the US presence as observers at the 11MSP, noting that this was a source of hope.

Chile gave an update on behalf of the informal working group, made up of Latin American states, which monitors the implementation of the Cartagena Action Plan.

Many affected states appealed to donors for renewed or increased funding, included Albania, Algeria, Mozambique, and Uganda.

Informal presentation and analysis of Article 5 extension requests

In the afternoon, the 11MSP heard the presentations of Article 5 deadline extension requests from Algeria, Chile, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Eritrea, followed by analysis of each request by the Analyzing Group, and comments by the ICRC and ICBL. Australia, Canada, Switzerland, and Norway also took the floor to comment on extension requests or the extension request process. The decisions on extension requests will be taken on Friday.

The 10MSP President pointed out that many states requesting extensions still lacked clarity regarding the location of all mined areas. He recommended that all States Parties in the process of implementing Article 5 intensify and accelerate efforts to locate and report on mined areas, especially if they believe it may be necessary to submit an extension request.

The 10MSP President noted the requests from Algeria, Chile, Eritrea and Democratic Republic of Congo had been submitted in a timely manner, and they were able to cooperate with the Analyzing Group fully. The Republic of the Congo missed its Article 5 deadline and did not submit an extension request until 24 November 2011.

Republic of the Congo
The 10MSP President outlined the steps that had been taken since the 10MSP to encourage Congo to report on location of mined areas and Congo’s failure to provide further information. It was noted with concern that Congo has been non-compliant with its Article 5 deadline since 1 November 2011.

The 10MSP President noted that if Congo did not intend to complete implementation of Article 5 by the end of its initial 14 month extension, it would need to submit a second extension request by 31 March 2012 to be considered at the 12MSP.
The ICRC expressed concern that Congo has not marked suspected mine areas. The ICRC and ICBL both supported granting an interim extension of 14 months to allow for the submission of a detailed second request, setting out a financially viable plan of action, including regular milestones.

Due to the extremely late submission of the request which made rigorous analysis impossible, Canada supported the grant of a 14 month extension on an exceptional basis with the understanding that Congo would submit a second, more detailed request no later than 31 March 2012.

In reply Congo claimed that it had not been able to fulfil its objectives under Article 5 due to the security situation and a shortage of financial and logistical resources to carry out operations in those places, but that Congo remained committed to respecting its Article 5 obligations in accordance with the 14 month extension it had requested.

Algeria
The 10MSP President concluded that Algeria’s plan for a five-year extension was workable, comprehensive and complete. He added that Algeria could benefit from the full range of technical and non-technical means of releasing hazardous areas and from discussions with other States Parties that have experience clearing similarly difficult terrain.

Canada and the ICRC supported Algeria’s request. The ICBL supported the request, though it noted that Algeria acknowledges that clearance began too late, and encouraged Algeria to make use of all safe and effective methods to release suspected hazardous areas as soon as possible and to create a timeframe for marking all known mined areas.

Chile
The 10MSP President and Canada congratulated Chile for its progress to date in meeting Article 5 obligations and concluded that its plan for an eight-year extension was workable, however they encouraged Chile to complete implementation of Article 5 sooner. The 10MSP President encouraged Chile to consider applying the full-range of land release methods.

The ICBL called on Chile to provide details of previous land release to allow understanding of how the total land release figures in the request were calculated, and also called on States Parties to carefully monitor Chile’s progress against the annual targets set out in the request throughout the proposed eight-year extension period.

DRC
The 10MSP President recognised the difficulties faced by the DRC given that early survey efforts led to an overestimation contaminated areas, and noted that the DRC
could benefit from providing additional information about costs associated with implementation of Article 5, including specifying how funds would be spent, in order to aid in resource mobilisation.

The ICBL welcomed the revision of DRC’s request, which reduced the initial extension period from four years to 26 months.

Eritrea
In considering Eritrea’s request for a three-year extension, the 10MSP President stated that it would be better if Eritrea could establish remaining contamination and prepare a second request in less than three years, pointed out that the projected budget exceeded the historical average of funds received, and expressed a desire for clarity around the decision to expel NGO operators.

The ICBL called for Eritrea to explain what seem to be inconsistencies in figures relating to hazardous areas cleared since the Landmine Impact Survey, and expressed concern about the reliability of Eritrea’s land release methodology after six years of refusing international technical support.

Eritrea stated that the rationale behind expelling NGOs was to attempt to cut corruption, by channelling all funding through government ministries.

General
The 10MSP President and Australia and the ICBL congratulated Algeria and Chile for demonstrating high levels of national ownership by funding their own demining programs.

The 10MSP President encouraged all those requesting extensions to include annual milestones in the requests and to provide regular updates on progress towards achieving these milestones. He noted that the extension request process places a heavy burden on those that are mandated to analyse the requests and that Co-Chairs and Co-Rapporteurs must recall that a central aspect of their responsibilities involves actively contributing to the analysis process.

Norway proposed that the process be modified so that Co-chairs make more use of external expert advice, retain input from the ICBL and ICRC and rely less on the active involvement of other States Parties, suggesting that this proposal be tested next year.

Switzerland expressed hope that states preparing extension requests in future can apply lessons learned. The 10MSP President, Australia and Switzerland were supportive of states requesting short initial interim extensions of the minimum length required to determine scope of contamination.