ICBL Comments on the Republic of Congo’s Article 5 Deadline Extension Request
November 2011

Article 5 deadline: 1 November 2011
Extension period requested: 2 years (1 November 2013)

It is deeply regrettable that the Republic of Congo (Congo) has only submitted an extension request after the expiry of its Article 5 deadline. It is therefore in violation of the Mine Ban Treaty following ten years in which it failed to confirm the nature and extent of antipersonnel mine contamination let alone to start clearance.

Clarification sought on the Extension Request

Key Issues

1. The extent of contamination is still to be clarified.
2. A clear commitment to complete Article 5 obligations within a determined timeframe is not made.
3. Resource mobilisation plans need to be set out.

Number and estimated size of contaminated areas

The request states that the district of Kimongo in the southeast of Congo is the “most affected” by mines and explosive remnants of war. Does this mean that other districts are also suspected or confirmed to be affected by antipersonnel mines?

Six villages have been identified as contamination during non-technical survey, but it is suggested that more villages need to be surveyed. How many villages have been surveyed so far and how many remain to be surveyed in the district of Kimongo?

Contamination in Kimongo appears to result from two periods of mine laying: by Portugal in 1964–1966, and by Angolan non-state armed groups in 1975. Were mines laid by other actors at other times? Have mine maps been requested from Portugal or will they be?

Past progress

The request does not provide specific dates for the survey work nor does it recognise that the limited survey work undertaken in autumn 2011 could have been performed several years ago had Congo been more proactive in seeking or responding to offers of assistance. What evidence can Congo provide that it will be more proactive during the extension period?
Work plan during the extension period

The request states that the two-year period will be needed to do the following:

- Mapping,
- National standards development,
- Non-technical survey,
- Technical survey,
- Clearance, and
- Resource mobilisation.

Little additional detail is provided. There is no timetable setting out the work to be done in the extension period, nor a pledge either to complete survey and clearance within the period requested, or to present a second extension request well before the expiry of the additional two years.

There is a commitment to secure funding for activities from the national budget, but no sum is mentioned nor is any plan or budget included for the work during the extension period. Unspecified funds will be sought from international partners, but those partners are not identified.

Conclusions and recommendations

The extension request is disappointing in many respects, not least as Congo is now in violation of the Mine Ban Treaty. It has come too late and lacks any detailed plan or budget. It is recommended that a 14-month interim extension (until 1 January 2013) be granted to enable Congo to clarify the situation and come back with a concrete plan for the fulfillment of its Article 5 obligations. The second extension request would be reviewed at the 12th Meeting of States Parties.