

Art.5 Statement

19th Meeting of States Parties

Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

Mr. President,

As this is the first time I am taking the floor, we wish to thank you Ambassador Gabrielse and the Dutch team as well as the ISU for all their efforts in organizing the 19th Meeting of States Parties in the best possible manner despite the ongoing difficult circumstances due to COVID 19 and all its implications.

Furthermore, we wish to express our appreciation to the Committees on Article 5 Implementation, Victim Assistance, cooperative compliance, Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance for their dedicated work and continuous efforts.

Austria fully aligns herself with the statements delivered by the European Union. On Article 5 we wish to deliver the following remarks in a national capacity.

Article 5 implementation is at the core of our objective to put an end to human suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines. Our shared ambition to achieve the 2025 commitment to clear all mined areas was reiterated in Oslo. Implementation of our obligations and commitments is guided by of the Oslo Action Plan. For the strength of the Convention continuous implementation of obligations and commitments is key. One of them is substantive reporting on progress achieved.

Every cleared areas provides tremendous humanitarian and socio-economic benefits. The extent of implementation of Article 5 clearance obligations varies widely. While much progress has been achieved, it has also become clear over the years that we need to intensify our efforts to accelerate progress on mine clearance. Every State Party's contamination situation is different. There is no one size fits all in mine action. Therefore, States Parties have developed over the years the cooperative practice of our Convention. We encourage all States Parties to actively engage in the cooperative processes.

The initial clearing period of ten years foreseen in Article 5 proved difficult for some States Parties and led to States Parties evoking the possibility of extension requests provided for in the Convention. In some cases even further extension requests were deemed necessary. Austria shares the concerns expressed about repeated extensions, delayed implementation, missed deadlines and non-implementation of commitments stated in extension requests. As of today a total of 88 extension requests were submitted. According to reports more than 25 States Parties are delayed to fulfil their Article 5 commitments, some are even in violation of their obligations under the Convention. We are concerned that no clearance was recorded or reported for 2020 in 11 States Parties. Every extension request has individual reasons and reflects the challenges on the ground but overall these numbers should be seen as a as a call for States Parties, affected and not-affected, not to be complacent.

The humanitarian challenges were recognized by the 2019 Review Conference, namely in Actions 23 and 24 of the Oslo Action Plan, which commits States to provide detailed, costed, multi-year plans for both clearance and mine risk reduction activities as part of their extension requests. The monitoring table

tracking the status of the implementation of the OAP and the priorities for implementation developed by the Coordination Committee give us a precise indication of the areas that need improvement and of the measures to be adopted to proceed steadily in the implementation. We should collectively ensure the implementation of provisions set by the Convention and the Oslo Action Plan.

In this regard we suggest that based upon the commitments in Action Points 23 and 24 of the OAP further collective steps to improve the process, ensure the clearance and strengthen the extensions process should be undertaken. To that end, ensuring that extension requests include detailed, multi-year and costed plans that are supported with the required resources is essential.

The article 5 procedure has undergone many reviews over the years. Given the number of extension requests, some cases of lack of transparency and unclear progress in obligation implementation, we believe that it is appropriate to mandate the article 5 committee to conduct a review of the extension process with the aim of proposing concrete recommendations how to improve and strengthen it, to the 20MSP in 2022. Cooperation among all actors involved is the signature practice and a key strength of the Convention. We therefore support the proposal to recreate a broader, more inclusive analysis group to support the work of the Art. 5 Committee.

Mr. President,

Austria shares the concern expressed by other delegations about the situation of Eritrea. Unfortunately, this situation has persisted for many years now. During our last membership of the Article 5 committee Austria in 2018-2019 together with the committee, as well as on nationally and together with European partners many efforts to engage with Eritrea in a cooperative manner were made. Yet, we are concerned that the situation remains unchanged and we therefore support the idea to collectively consider invoking Article 8.2.

Mr. President,

Austria strongly condemns the use of anti-personnel mines anywhere, anytime, and by any actor, whether States or non-State actors. The burden placed by anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war on individuals, families, communities, regions and States remains high and unacceptable. Therefore, we encourage all States Parties to intensify their efforts to complete their time-bound obligations as soon as possible, and to the fullest extent possible.

I thank you