

ICBL Statement on Transparency
Third Review Conference of the Mine Ban Treaty
26 June 2014 (not delivered)



Thank you Mr. President.

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines and its research arm the Landmine Monitor are among the most frequent users of states' Article 7 reports. Our researchers and campaigners read all States Parties' reports very carefully. We depend on the information states provide to properly monitor and advocate for full implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty. So we have an interest in making sure reports are timely, accurate, and comprehensive, and we'd like to share some observations in that regard.

First, we are disheartened to see that Article 7 submission rates have been declining steadily over the past decade, from a high of 79% for calendar year 2003 to a low 53% for 2012. This figure shows a disturbing disregard for states' legal reporting obligation, which applies every year whether a state has other remaining treaty requirements or not. We count 84 states that have not turned in their annual update on 2013 activities, which were due by the end of April, meaning that the submission rate now stands at only 47%. In addition, there are still two countries – Equatorial Guinea and Tuvalu – that are late in turning in their initial Article 7 report. We cannot have a full picture of the status of the convention without these initial reports.

At the same time, we are pleased to see some states not parties submitting voluntary reports in recent years as a sign of their support for the goals of the treaty, including Azerbaijan, Lao PDR, Morocco, and Palestine. We also note the voluntary report submitted by the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic, which provides information on its remaining stockpile, its stockpile destruction activities, and its mine clearance efforts.

In terms of quality, we often see data that is incomplete, unclear, inconsistent over time, or absent on relevant treaty obligations. For example states should report on mines discovered or seized after the completion of stockpile destruction programs and on their destruction, but often public information on such discoveries are included in states' Forms B and G, which were modified to encourage such reporting. As well, of the 78 states retaining mines under Article 3, only around 20 have used the voluntary portion of Form D to report on past and planned use, despite the call to do so in the Cartagena Action Plan. The ICBL has called for states to provide more voluntary information on treaty implementation through Form J, including on victim assistance, international cooperation and assistance, foreign stockpiles, and steps taken to ensure that claymore-type mines cannot be used in victim activated mode.

Poor information and irregular reporting has been especially problematic for reporting on Article 5 obligations. With this in mind, we strongly favor the creation of the proposed Article 5 committee, which was designed in part to provide an incentive for better reporting by creating a state-to-state "feedback loop."

The ICBL believes that states could also be motivated to improve reporting through a greater appreciation of the value of the reports – for others and for themselves. For example, the Landmine Monitor team uses states’ reports intensively to produce our annual report and country profiles, which describe the status of all states vis-à-vis the treaty. The President of the Mine Ban Treaty and the ISU similarly depend on the reports to produce annual progress reports.

Both the Monitor and Progress Reports then help inform a larger community of interested states and other actors on the individual and collective status of the treaty. The various treaty committee co-chairs use the reports to help support states facing implementation challenges or to share good practices among states. The media and activists also look to the reports to raise awareness about the treaty among an even larger group.

So the more clarity states give on their status and activities, the better the outside world will understand the situation in their country and the treaty as a whole. Indeed, there are many states, including those outside the Mine Ban Treaty, that want to see the impact of the treaty and how well it’s being respected by States Parties. Progress is seen as a good confidence-building measure for states in the same region, and can be beneficial for universalization.

Donors also make use of the individual and compiled reports to help them assess requests for assistance. For those states receiving aid already, the reports showcase what has been accomplished with such support. For those seeking additional support, the reports show donors what work remains to be done, and what specific problems might benefit from international support. Again, the more details states report on progress and challenges, the better others will be able to support them in the future.

Last, but not least, the reporting state itself should be an active user of its own reports. As part of good management practices, the data on various treaty obligations should be regularly collected, easily accessible, and simple to extract. If, in preparing a report, a state finds this is not the case, then the report will have helped identify a need to improve data management. In addition, we encourage states to use their own reports to keep track of progress over time, especially relative to benchmarks in plans, such as those submitted with mine clearance extension requests.

So overall, we encourage States Parties to look at reporting not as a burden but an exercise with many benefits for themselves. It may take a bit of time, but the investment is certainly worth it. And of course for states with no remaining convention obligations, reporting is very quick and simple to do. We would like to end by welcoming the Maputo Action Plan language on transparency, which it rightly notes “is essential to achieving the Convention’s aims.”

Thank you.