

NORWAY

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Panel Session IV: Continental / international co-operation & assistance

International efforts to promote effective co-operation – Coordinator of the Resource Mobilisation Contact Group (Norway)

Thank you.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. Let me first thank South Africa and the African Union for inviting Norway to speak at this important Conference, and on such an important issue as Cooperation and Assistance. My name is Ingunn Vatne, and I work in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the Section of Humanitarian Affairs. I have been asked to address the Conference in Norway's capacity as Coordinator of the Contact Group on Resource Utilisation, one of several informal mechanisms or groups under the Mine Ban Convention that grew out of the need to focus on certain issues that could benefit from more enhanced and in-depth discussions.

The Mine Ban Convention came about as a partnership between mine-affected states and other states, and between states, international organisations and civil society, in particular the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. This partnership underpins the Convention and the implementation of its obligations, including the issue of cooperation and assistance.

The Convention is more than a prohibition of anti-personnel mines; it is also a strategic framework for mobilising resources for addressing the problem caused by anti-personnel mines. Article 6 codifies States Parties' right to seek assistance and the obligations to provide assistance.

All States Parties; those with obligations to clear and destroy anti-personnel mines and to assist victims, those without such obligations and those who are in position to provide resources have a responsibility to contribute to mine action.

The Convention has been extremely efficient as a vehicle for resource mobilization in its first decade and the global level of funding for mine action has remained high. Only since the Nairobi summit in 2004, more than 2,5 billion USD have been allocated for mine action around the world. In spite of this it is a fact that several mine-affected states experience problems in identifying and mobilising funds for some of their mine action activities. The result is that clearance of mined areas is delayed, and that survivors and other victims do not receive the assistance they are entitled to.

We – all States Parties - need to respond adequately to this situation. The Mine Ban Convention was a response to a humanitarian crisis, and it is not acceptable that anti-personnel mines continue to kill and maim civilians, and hinder productive development of land, a decade after they were banned.

To achieve the aims of the Convention continued dedicated funding for mine action is required; for clearance, stockpile destruction and victim assistance. This is an issue raised time and again by affected states, including during yesterday's discussions, and by the international organisations and civil society involved in all aspects of mine action. But achieving the aims of the Convention is not only about raising and spending more money

– experience over the last decade of implementation has clearly demonstrated that. *How* resources are spent is just as important as the amount of funds available.

As Coordinator of the Contact Group on Resource Utilisation, Norway has facilitated discussions among States Parties and practitioners for some years on how best to mobilise and use mine action resources. These discussions have been based on the realities in the field, the challenges experienced by mine action operators and national authorities, those tasked with the practical implementation of the obligations of the treaty.

It is not possible to come up with one single answer on how to improve international cooperation for mine action and on how to raise more resources and use them more effectively. What we have learned through the discussions in the Contact Group is that we must work in a coherent manner on several areas. For the purpose of our discussion here I will mention four relevant areas, but there are of course more.

1. Increased effectiveness and efficiency in all aspects of mine action, particularly in survey and clearance.
2. Increased technical and regional cooperation between States Parties within all fields of mine action
3. Development of stronger targeted partnerships among States Parties and with relevant UN organisations, civil society and the private sector aimed at solving concrete tasks, based on needs.
4. Strengthened national ownership, competence and capacity to address the mine problems

1. Increased effectiveness and efficiency:

In short – my first point is about getting more mine action out of the investments we make. For many years the main focus was on how to secure as much funding as possible for mine action, often in combination with a strong focus on new technology. Both are important but experience has shown us that these are not the most crucial factors for improving performance. What matters more is the way the work is organised and the methods that are used – among all actors; national authorities, the mine clearance operators, states supporting mine action and the relevant United Nations organisations.

We know that there is room for major improvement among all actors; in the way support to mine action is structured by actors like Norway, how national mine action authorities are organised and their relationship to other relevant national planning and decision-making bodies; how international mine action NGOs operate and not least co-operate with other relevant actors; and in the quality of the services provided by the United Nations – just to mention some areas. In addition, we have come to understand how an inclusive process at all levels is essential to achieve sustainable results, how the involvement of survivors and local communities provides a better chance of designing programmes with the desired affect. Moreover, we have learned that gender-sensitive strategies and a focus on the different experiences and knowledge of women and men

when conducting surveys and humanitarian demining, just to mention one example, will increase effectiveness of our efforts.

The mine action sector is fairly new, and a key feature of it is its ability to learn from lessons made - both negative and positive - and to improve performance. Some major faults have been made – to mention one, certain surveys that have been actively promoted by the donors and experts have clearly overstated the mine problem and not provided operational data. On the other hand, the whole mine action sector have during the past year undergone a radical shift in how to address suspected mined areas. The shift towards improved Land Release methods has the potential to vastly improve effectiveness in mine clearance. This shift has been driven by the field operators and shows how this sector is able to improve. Based on such discussions in the Contact Group on Resource Utilisation and elsewhere, Norway prepared a set of recommendations on using the full range of methods to release land, that was approved by the 9MSP in 2008. Through national application of these principles, mine-affected States Parties therefore have a recognition of a wider range of methods, and can in any circumstance use what method is most appropriate to release land more effectively.

2. Increased technical cooperation:

The first civilian and humanitarian mine clearance programs started up some 20 years ago in Afghanistan and Cambodia, and later in Mozambique. Now there are comprehensive mine action programs on all continents, employing a broad range of experts from social scientists, engineers, technicians, mine clearers, civil servants, medical personnel, rehabilitation experts, and not least mine survivors.

So we have a global pool of competence that we need to make use of in a better way than we do currently. This means that we must to a much larger degree recognise the competence that exists in mine-affected States, and not only the competence of so-called international experts. We must find ways to facilitate that national expertise built up in one country that may be approaching the end of its own mine problem can support colleagues in other mine-affected countries where the problem still is large, and not least to support countries that have mine problems that are so limited that there is less need to build up a large national capacity. Making use of existing expertise and capacity more than we do today means that we need to find effective ways to support this. This is an area where states providing support to mine action has much to learn - how this can be done better. I am afraid that in many instances it is still “easier” to provide support to a well-established European mine action NGO than to an African operator or to a national mine action agency with expertise that may be valuable for other states. This is a challenge for us, and one that we need to take seriously – in close cooperation with affected states and the relevant United Nations organisations.

In the area of technical cooperation, regional cooperation is particularly important, and regional and sub-regional organisations – as mentioned by several yesterday – have an essential role to play to match needs for technical expertise with available experience in the region.

3. Development of targeted partnerships

It is likely that we can expect a certain, and for some also significant, decline in dedicated mine action funding over the coming five years. The global financial crisis, new agendas and other pressing humanitarian issues are factors that contribute to this situation. One way to mitigate this is that states and other relevant actors develop new forms for cooperation and partnerships than we have seen up to now. One such way could be time-bound and targeted strategic partnerships to address a specific mine problem – in a state or a region. Such a partnership should not only be about financial support flowing from one state to another, but a comprehensive one integrating financial support with political, technical and diplomatic support, over several years, with ongoing evaluation and willingness to adjust the course according to changing needs and realities.

Such partnerships could include a range of actors, national authorities; international and national mine action NGOs, United Nations and other international organisations, private sector and media industry. They could concern limited tasks, such as the demining of one particular area, or broader tasks – such as the implementation of a national mine action strategy. The key point here is that we should all look for ways to match real needs with the full range of resources needed to address them – in a predictable and transparent manner that facilitate rational long-term planning, local and national involvement and ownership. So far the willingness to commit considerable financial support to mine action has been impressive, and now we need to match this with willingness to innovative thinking so that support and cooperation can be structured even better in the future.

Norway is in the process of developing a pilot project for such a strategic partnership that we hope will provide an example of alternative ways of organising cooperation and assistance.

This brings us to my fourth point.

4. National ownership

A cornerstone for such partnerships will be strong and committed national mine action authorities, led by competent individuals, with firm backing from the political level and a clear understanding of their responsibilities and tasks.

Discussions in the Contact Group on Resource Utilisation as well as discussions among all States Parties have stressed the crucial importance of national ownership and national mine action authorities. There is broad agreement about this. International cooperation must be structured in a way that supports national ownership rather than undermining it. We need to develop better understanding on how international cooperation best can support and strengthen competent and committed national mine action authorities. The first step supporting states need to take is to recognise the central role of national authorities and work with them on how the mine problem best can be addressed.

But this is not a one-way process. Mine-affected states themselves need to invest in their own mine action authorities and provide them with the necessary mandate, authority and a certain amount of domestic funding. In addition, the national authorities must be managed in a competent manner and pursue rigorous quality control in their work.

The head of Jordan's national mine action authority has identified five steps a mine-affected state should take to enhance national ownership, independent of international funding. Even though most of you will have heard this before, let me repeat these steps:

1. high level interest and leadership in fulfilling mine clearance obligations,
2. a national authority empowered and provided with the human, financial and material capacity to carry out its responsibilities,
3. a clear understanding of the size, location and quality of the Article 5 implementation challenge or a commitment to promptly acquire such an understanding,
4. a realistic but not unambitious plan to complete implementation of Article 5 in a reasonable amount of time, and,
5. a regular significant national financial commitment to the State's own humanitarian demining programme.

To conclude, as Coordinator of the Contact Group on Resource Utilisation – and as President-Designate of the Second Review Conference - we have heard the calls for more focus on international assistance and cooperation. In the coming period, we will work – together with all of you we hope - on how we as a community can improve how we match needs with technical and financial resources. In that work we will continue to address issues I have mentioned here – as well as issues that others may suggest. These discussions alone will of course not solve the problem of securing funding for mine action, but they are issues we need to deal with better than we have done so far.

I look forward to hearing your comments and suggestions on how to take these discussions forward together.

Thank you.