

Mine Ban Treaty's 5th Review Conference – key messages, aims and priorities

ICBL comments at Informal Briefing – 1 March 2024

Tamar Gabelnick, Director ICBL-CMC

Good afternoon Your Excellency, Excellencies, Colleagues,

Many thanks for offering the ICBL the opportunity to offer some initial remarks on our expectations for the 5th Review Conference. And thanks to Zoran for reminding us why we are here with your powerful testimony.

I'd like to start by wishing the group a happy birthday to our “communal child” – the Mine Ban Convention is 25 years old today, and we're very pleased to be here to celebrate together. We can all be extremely proud of this Convention for all it has done to end to use of AP mines in most countries, destroy stockpiles, clear vast tracts of land, promote the rights of survivors, and generally better the lives of mine-affected communities around the world. The Convention became a model convention for other humanitarian disarmament initiatives when it so quickly came into force 25 years ago, and remains a strong model today given the continued demonstration of strong commitment it generates from its Member States two and half decades later.

Turning to the Review Conference, the ICBL is thrilled to be returning to Cambodia, the cradle of the convention, the place that provided the inspiration to quickly negotiate a treaty, and home to many powerful advocates. We would like to encourage this community to use this unique opportunity – one we have only every five years – to give a big push forward on the convention's obligations and its norms. Returning to Cambodia gives us the chance to return to original core objectives of the treaty: ridding the world of these weapons once and for all, and keeping people and communities affected by landmines at the center of our work. We also need to recall the convention's total ban in all circumstances, its comprehensiveness and inclusivity, and its sense of urgency.

The ICBL created a slogan for the Review Conference that sums up these points: “Eradicate landmines and empower lives! No excuses, no exceptions, no delays.”

As I said earlier, we certainly have much to celebrate as we head to the Review Conference. But as civil society, the ICBL wouldn't be fulfilling its role if we didn't continue to emphasize the remaining challenges as well. Among these challenges are stagnation on universalization – with no new states parties since 2017 - long-missed stockpile destruction deadlines; new, extensive use of antipersonnel landmines by Russia and other governments, instances of use by a State Party, use of improvised mines by non-state armed groups, and even highly disturbing reports of states feeling threatened by Russia reconsidering their commitment to the convention. There is also a sense of lethargy as year after year passes without any states declaring completion of clearance obligations, and survivors reporting no major changes in the fulfillment of their rights. In order to achieve the

full promise of the convention, we must all remain vigilant in our defense of the convention, its norms, and its obligations, no excuses, no exceptions, no delays.

The ICBL has four key expectations for the 5th Review Conference:

1. Major announcements of achievements and plans

We hope to see States Parties come to the Review Conference not just with regular progress reports, but with announcements of major milestones achieved and new ambitious targets set, such as expected dates for finishing clearance and outstanding stockpile destruction, or announcements of higher earmarked budgets for victim assistance or new funding. We also very much hope that states outside the convention will announce accession or other major steps and timelines on the way to accession or ratification for the remaining signatory country.

2. Strong Political Declaration – should include both a celebration of positive news, as well as:

- Honest recognition of compliance challenges and implementation delays;
- Genuine recommitment to “do more and do better” and to strategically refocus on the primary objective and core obligations of the convention; and
- A clear and united message of unequivocal condemnation of ALL use of antipersonnel mines by anyone under any circumstances.

3. A solid Action Plan and Machinery

The Action Plan should build on Oslo Action plan, a combination of ambition and realism, with an effective roadmap towards completion of all obligations. So the next Review Conference will have even more positive news to report, the Action Plan should indicators and other means to ensure the fine words on paper are put into practice. The machinery is generally strong, but there have been new ideas around international cooperation and assistance and clearance that should be considered. This has always been an innovative group – let’s keep our minds open to any new ideas that might lead us faster to our collective goals. There is not enough time today to get into details, but we will definitely communicate our ideas soon.

4. High level and meaningful participation

As per Cambodia’s wish for the 5RevCon to be a summit, ministerial attendance would be expected. The Summit should also witness full and meaningful inclusion of survivors and people with disabilities, as well as women, including on states’ delegations. The ICBL will be bringing a big delegation that will also include many survivor advocates, and youth fellows, and will ensure gender balance.

These are some of the outcomes that will demonstrate a successful conference. But the real proof will be significant changes the ground, and actions by us all to make them happen. The opportunity brought by a Review Conference is not just a point in time, but the year leading up to it. We hope we can work with you all to push for progress not just in your own country or organization, but with other countries needing your support, funding, or clear messages.

Your Excellency, you have the privilege of presiding over a Review Conference that provides enormous opportunities – not only to promote continued progress but also to overcome ongoing challenges. The ICBL and its member organisations stand ready to support your work over the course of the year to ensure the Summit is as successful as possible.