

Comments on Bulgaria's extension request
9th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions
2-4 September 2019



Thank you, Mr. President.

We thank the Article 3 Committee and the Analysis Group for their extensive efforts in following-up with Bulgaria on this request.

This is the first time we consider a request for an Article 3 deadline extension under this convention, and we hope there won't be any more. There should not be. Our statement will highlight positive aspects and points for improvement.

Because there are no intersessional meetings under this convention, we are collectively missing an opportunity for dialogue with states that request extensions, and these states are missing an opportunity to improve their requests before Meetings of States Parties on the basis of public comments from states and other stakeholders.

Given the extension requests for both clearance and stockpile destruction this year, we hope next year's Review Conference will consider re-introducing intersessional meetings. This would be a helpful way to foster the spirit of transparency, openness and collaboration that should prevail under this convention.

It is unfortunate Bulgaria failed to meet its stockpile destruction deadline, despite having committed to destroy its cluster munitions stockpile "well in advance" of the deadline. Bulgaria's two previous attempts of identifying a contractor to carry out the destruction of its stockpile were unsuccessful. We were pleased to hear yesterday that a contractor (Italian company Esplodenti Sabino) was finally identified and a contract was signed on 24 July.

Among the positive points of Bulgaria's extension request, we note the following:

- Bulgaria has secured 1.8 million USD to destroy its stockpile, which (as Bulgaria indicated yesterday) is sufficient to carry destruction of Lot 1 and 2 of its stockpile, to be completed "tentatively" by the end of 2020. This is certainly note-worthy.
- Bulgaria also provided clarifications as to discrepancies in regard to quantity and type of cluster munitions and submunitions presented in the extension request and its Art. 7 report

Among the points that will require clarifications and further efforts in the coming months, we note the following:

- Firstly -- The request lacks a comprehensive work plan that would clearly specify when the actual destruction starts, how it will be carried out and by when completed. This is an absolutely essential requirement of any extension request. We understand Bulgaria was not in a position to present the Project Management Plan without having identified a contractor. Now, after having signed the destruction contract, Bulgaria needs to urgently present a clear, comprehensive plan, and start destroying its stockpile without further delay.

- Secondly – the funding needed for destruction of Lot 3 of Bulgaria’s stockpiled cluster munitions is yet to be secured and for now it remains unclear whether and when Bulgaria will secure all necessary funding. Thus it remains unclear by when Bulgaria will be able to fully complete destruction of its stockpile. We took note of Bulgaria’s efforts to secure this additional funding from the US and we ask Bulgaria to do all it can to do that asap and keep States Parties regularly informed about these efforts.
- And finally – Bulgaria should provide a rationale for its plan to retain 8 cluster munitions and 400 submunitions. Previously Bulgaria stated on a number of occasions that it did not intend to retain any cluster munitions for training and research purposes. We would like to hear why this change of mind.

In closing, we call on Bulgaria to put destruction of its cluster munitions stockpile at the top of its priority list and urgently proceed to fulfilling its obligation, keeping the States Parties regularly informed about the progress. We would like to hear next year at the Review Conference that Bulgaria has completed destruction of its stockpile.

At the same time, we take the opportunity to remind again all states that still possess stockpiles to plan in advance and to not delay their destruction, which as per Article 3 of the Convention should be completed “as soon as possible but not later than eight years after the entry into force of this Convention for that State Party.”

Thank you.