

**Comments on Germany's extension request**  
**9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions**  
**2-4 September 2019**



Thank you, Mr. President.

After a surprisingly slow start, clearance activities seem to finally pick up speed in Germany. The most noteworthy aspect of these clearance efforts is that the contaminated area is entirely located in a former military training zone that is not in any way accessible to civilians. The contamination currently has no impact on the activities of local populations. By undertaking clearance of this area and requesting a new deadline here today, Germany is carefully implementing its obligation under Article 4, which requires that all contamination be addressed, regardless of its location or its current impact on people. This is positive indeed and should be noted by all States Parties.

However, the obligation under the Convention was to clear the area as soon as possible, and in Germany, like in several other States Parties, it does not seem like this obligation was closely respected from the onset. Indeed the first years of Article 4 implementation only comprised a series of lengthy administrative steps, and Germany's annual progress reports to States Parties contained minimal and repetitive information.

**Among the positive points of the request, we note that:**

- The request shows a clear intention of completing clearance within the next five years and a strong resolve to make this happen. Given the terrain and procedural constraints, this might seem like an ambitious goal, so we look forward to hearing regular updates on progress;
- Germany is demonstrating complete national ownership of clearance activities and is covering all related costs. It is our understanding that new tools had to be developed, such as a remotely-controlled vehicle, and we hope these technical advances could possibly serve other countries as well;
- Germany provided relevant and timely answers to all the questions asked by the Analysis Group, thus showing that it takes the extension request process seriously and setting a positive example in this first year of deployment of the extension request process.

**Among the points that will require clarification or regular updates in the coming months and years, we note that:**

- The extension request does not include annual plans for the deployment of clearance activities. However, Germany has provided an explanation why it is not possible to develop such plans for a five-year period.
- For many years starting in 2011, Germany has provided very little information on clearance efforts at Wittstock. Apart from the administrative steps of transferring land ownership, it was hard for external observers to understand what was being done to implement Article 4.

The whole point of having compulsory annual transparency reports, and detailed statements made at meetings of States Parties, is for this community to collectively assess the global efforts made to implement the convention. Seeing progress is motivating for other States Parties, and it helps to attract new states to join the Convention as well.

Seeing how fellow affected states tackle clearance is helpful and inspiring for states struggling with contamination. So, it is in this spirit that we call on Germany to increase the level of detail of its annual reporting, including narrative and anecdotal information. The extension request provides a great deal of such detail, and it would be a shame to wait until the conclusion of the program – five more years! – to receive similar updates.

Thank you.