

Informal meeting on Enhancing International Cooperation and Assistance under the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM)

13:15 – 14:45, Friday 24 November, Room E2070-2072, Palais de Nations

MEETING SUMMARY

On Friday 24 November 2017, Australia and Peru, CCM Coordinators on International Cooperation and Assistance, hosted an informal meeting in the margins of the 2017 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Meeting of High Contracting Parties.

Fifteen representatives from affected states, other states with pressing obligations under the CCM and the CCM Coordination Committee participated in the meeting. Affected states were encouraged to share with each other and the Coordinators the challenges they faced in implementing the CCM, priority needs to meet those challenges and key issues regarding accessing assistance.

1. KEY POINTS RAISED

1.1 Challenges and needs relating to implementing the CCM:

- Scale of contamination
- Lack of capacity
- Lack of funding
- Lack of technical expertise and resources
- Lack of long term partnerships with donors
- Internal procedures and administrative bottlenecks
- Ongoing armed conflict
- Newly discovered contamination
- Geographic condition including harsh climates and inaccessible topography

1.2 Key issues regarding accessing assistance:

- Provision of funding to a few select states rather than all states in need
- A lack of transparency about donor countries' priorities in providing assistance
- Funding being tied to specific projects
- A lack of international organization presence

1.3 Key outcomes and recommendations :

Outcomes

- One request for financial and technical assistance to complete clearance and technical assistance to complete a National Action Plan on Victim Assistance

Recommendations

- States requiring assistance should be more assertive in pursuing assistance at an early stage.
- Affected states should be more active in pursuing regional cooperation as a mechanism to meet CCM obligations.
- States requiring assistance should have a detailed completion plan in place and provide specific details in assistance requests regarding the nature of assistance required and the extent of existing national investment in completion efforts
- States requiring assistance need to keep sensitising donors/partners to their needs to combat loss of institutional memory.

- The ISU or the International Cooperation and Assistance Co-Coordinator could establish a database facilitating not only the sharing of information on donor/partner priorities and capacities to assist, but also the sharing of needs and experience between affected states.
- Donors/partners should coordinate closely with national mine action authorities to understand the real needs and priorities for assistance. Donor states should remain sensitive to each affected States' needs. They should not apply a cookie cutter approach.
- Donors/partners should consider long-term/multi-year partnerships with States requiring assistance
- The Country Coalition approach offers an effective framework for ensuring national ownership and long-term commitments by donors/partners.
- Article 7 reports are a key channel for communication: affected States and others with pressing obligations should use these reports to provide full details of needs, and donor/partner states should use them to provide full details of assistance capacities and priorities.

2. DETAILED RECORD OF THE MEETING

2.1 Introductory Remarks:

- Australia and Peru, CCM Coordinators on International Cooperation and Assistance, explained that the meeting aimed to garner an understanding of the challenges affected states face in meeting their obligations under the CCM. The Coordinators explained that the key objectives of the meeting were:
 - To allow affected states to freely share unmet needs and challenges with the further objective of providing this information to donor states.
 - To encourage enhanced partnerships between affected and donor states in an effort to facilitate timely and effective achievement of deadlines.
 - To provide affected states with a channel to raise ongoing issues they face when engaging with the International Cooperation and Assistance framework.
- The Coordinators outlined the points that previous meetings had identified as key issues to be considered when forming partnerships between States on implementation of obligations:
 - Lack of funding, technical expertise and resources were major obstacles to meeting obligations;
 - Lack of national ownership and political will to implement obligations were also key barriers to meeting obligations;
 - Donors/partners could assist with building capacity of national mine action authorities and local NGOs;
 - Donors/partners require the provision as much detail as possible on the status of implementation of convention obligations, specific hurdles to meeting deadlines and what assistance is required;
 - Key channels of communications include: direct bilateral contact, meetings on the margins of multilateral meetings, NGOs and Article 7 reports;
 - The need for better coordination amongst donors to ensure all states in need of assistance receive support;

- The usefulness of the Coordinators meeting separately with States in need of assistance and donor/partner States before holding joint meetings.
- Australia and Peru noted that in the coming year they would host three meetings as Coordinators: one with donor states, one with affected states and one with donor and affected states together. This meeting, with affected States and others with pressing obligations only, was the first of the new three meeting cycle.

2.2 Overview of Current status of Cooperation and Assistance Needs

- Sheila Mweemba, Director of the CCM Implementation Support Unit (ISU), provided the following update on the overall status of reporting:
 - 82% of Article 7 reports had been received so far in 2016. The ISU was still awaiting the receipt of 18 reports.
 - There had been an increase in the number of states requesting assistance. In 2015, 10 states requested assistance. In 2016, 13 states requested assistance.
 - There had been an increase in the number of states providing assistance. In 2015, 14 states provided assistance. In 2016, 19 states provided assistance.
 - There had also been an increase in the number of states who received assistance. In 2015, four states received assistance. In 2016, 10 states received assistance.
- Regarding Article 3 Stockpile Destruction:
 - 10 states had obligations of which not every state had requested assistance
 - Two states had deadlines in 2018. Neither required assistance and the ISU believed both were on track.
 - Three states had deadlines in 2019. One had requested and received assistance and one had stated they will meet the deadline without assistance. The position of the final state was unclear.
- Regarding Article 4 Clearance:
 - 10 states had obligations of which only seven have requested assistance.
 - Most of the assistance given under this article had been given to the same countries.
- Regarding Article 5 Victim Assistance, 11 states had reported obligations of which only eight had requested assistance.
- Regarding Article 9 National Implementation Measures, only one state had requested assistance.

2.3 Interventions by States

- An affected state reported:
 - Its Ministry of Interior was the focal point for the implementation of CCM obligations.
 - With the assistance of a donor/partner State, it had identified possible contamination areas amounting to approximately one million sq. m of

- land. Some of these areas were close to its national airport and capital. However, the majority of contamination was in regions difficult to access.
- Efforts had already been made to address the problem: 6500 sq. m of contaminated areas had been cleared.
 - However, the State lacked capacity to conduct clearance operations and further assistance would be required to clear the remaining area. The State specifically requested financial expertise and material assistance.
 - On victim assistance, the State explained that it had no victims of cluster munitions – most victims had injuries from ERW. Noting their full commitment to the Dubrovnik Action Plan, the State outlined how these victims were granted personal disability benefits.
 - The State requested legal and technical assistance to produce a national action plan on victim assistance.
- A representative of the Coordination Committee asked:
 - Whether participating states faced issues stemming from underfunding on victim assistance?
 - If so, why this was the case? Did it stem from donors' perceptions or from states failing to prioritise victim assistance?
 - An affected State reported:
 - It had 400 sq. km of mine contamination but only one sq. km of cluster munitions contamination.
 - It had initially been too proud to ask for assistance with stockpile destruction and victim assistance and would have done much better in addressing its challenges if it had been more assertive in seeking assistance earlier.
 - On victim assistance, it had a low number of victims and its system was working well. With the assistance of a key donor it had commenced work on a mine victims database.
 - On clearance, 2/3rds of its funding came from a regional organisation. If these funds were not provided, the program would not be sustainable.
 - It did not have large demining companies. Instead, it had a market system made up of 40 demining companies.
 - Communication at the regional level between affected States and others with pressing obligations was not as effective as it could be. States needed to interact more and push each other to fulfil their CCM obligations.
 - An affected state made three recommendations:
 - The ICA Co-Coordination or the ISU should establish a website facilitating the exchange of information both on donor/partner capacities and priorities, and experience and good practices between affected states.
 - Donor countries should provide funding to all countries rather than a few high profile countries.
 - Donor countries sometimes cut or shifter their assistance without explanation, and should provide more information about their priorities and strategies to make the assistance process more transparent to affected states.
 - A representative of the Coordination Committee reported:

- A technical workshop had recently been held in Sarajevo for States in the Western Balkans region. Affected states in the region and donor states were invited.
- The rationale for the workshop was that many states in the Western Balkans have small areas left to clear. The workshop answered questions that included:
 - How should states optimize clearance?
 - How should state prepare technical completion plans?
 - How should contaminated areas be cleared?
- States were encouraged to share experiences. One of the key conclusions from the workshop was that 'if affected countries provide their needs and challenges in a written and succinct manner when requesting assistance, donor countries were more likely to engage'.
- An affected State said:
 - Its contaminated area was too small to warrant a completion plan. However, it had made a political commitment to finish clearance by 2018.
- An affected State said:
 - It had reduced the size of their contaminated area significantly but still had substantial progress to make.
 - It agreed regional cooperation could be much better than it is.
 - It supported further regional-level workshops noting that sharing experiences was very useful.
- A representative of the Coordination Committee said:
 - Donors often benefit from affected countries producing clear and precise budgets for the work for which they required assistance. This was because donors:
 - Liked to see where their money would be going
 - Often matched funds in a 1:1 ratio
- The ISU noted:
 - That under Dubrovnik Action Plan Action 3.3 states must prepare resourced plans for clearance, no matter the size of the area.
 - These plans increase transparency, allow affected states to determine where assistance is required and provide donor states with vital information.
- An affected State said:
 - It faced a number of challenges in dealing with cluster munitions contamination. These included:
 - Human resources: the capacity of the people working in the mine action program fields, including all of the represented partners was not at the level required to deal with the large areas of contamination.
 - The current security situation.
 - Newly discovered mine fields: non-technical and technical surveys had led to the discovery of new minefields, which in turn had led to an increase in contaminated areas and amendments to the demining plans for these fields.

- Climate and topographic conditions: change in climate and the terrain variation lead to obstruction of demining work in some areas for a period of time annually.
 - The lack of new technology, such as modern detection devices and heavy machines, used for demining.
 - The majority of mine fields were semi-random and identifying mines in them required a lot of effort and time.
 - The lack of information, files and maps for minefields.
 - The low presence of international organisations and demining teams clearly had a detrimental effect on the progress of the national demining program.
 - Mines and ERW had an economic impact on all aspects of the country.
 - Internally Displaced Persons: the internal displacement of the Iraqi people was one of the problems facing demining activities.
 - From these challenges, it recommended that:
 - Affected states should give detailed information about their needs on the ground. This facilitated better coordination with donor states.
 - Donor states are encouraged to engage with national mine action authorities in order to get clear and accurate information about the real needs and priorities on the ground.
- An affected State said:
 - Its contaminated area was very large. In response, it had prepared a long-term plan for mine clearance.
 - It needed long-term cooperation and assistance to meet its challenges, and in general, donors/partners should consider committing to long-term assistance rather than short term initiatives.
- A representative of the Coordination Committee said:
 - That the 'Country Coalitions' approach offered an effective framework for ensuring national ownership and long-term commitments by donors/partners.
- A representative of the Coordination Committee noted:
 - Reasons why donor States cut or shifted their assistance could include:
 - Donor States tended to funnel their assistance toward States which had higher profile than others at a certain time. When the profile of other States changed, donors might shift their assistance.
 - Donor States might also remove their assistance based on a misunderstanding that the problem had been solved or due to loss of institutional memory. It was important that affected States continuously sensitised donor States to their needs.
- The ISU noted:
 - Article 7 Reports were a critical channel for providing up-to-date information that might prevent donor States shifting their assistance prematurely. Article 7 Reports should be used to share quality, concise and accurate information about States' progress and needs with regard to implementation of CCM obligations.

2.4 Summary Comments

- In reflecting upon the interventions made at the meeting, Australia and Peru outlined the following points that emerged from the session in their minds and that they would carry forward to discussions with donor/partner States at a separate meeting later in the year:
 1. There had been one clear request for financial and technical assistance to complete clearance and technical assistance to complete a National Action Plan on Victim Assistance, which the Coordinators would seek to take forward.
 2. States requiring assistance should be more assertive in pursuing assistance at an early stage.
 3. Affected states should be more active in pursuing regional cooperation as a mechanism to meet CCM obligations.
 4. States requiring assistance should have a detailed completion plan in place and provide specific details in assistance requests regarding the nature of assistance required and the extent of existing national investment in completion efforts
 5. States requiring assistance need to keep sensitising donors/partners to their needs to combat loss of institutional memory.
 6. The ISU or the International Cooperation and Assistance Co-ordinators could establish a database facilitating not only the sharing of information on donor/partner priorities and capacities to assist, but also the sharing of needs and experience between affected states.
 7. Donors/partners should coordinate closely with national mine action authorities to understand the real needs and priorities for assistance. Donor states should remain sensitive to each affected states needs. They should not apply a cookie cutter approach.
 8. Donors/partners should consider long-term/multi-year partnerships with States requiring assistance
 9. The Country Coalition approach offers an effective framework for ensuring national ownership and long-term commitments by donors/partners.
 10. Article 7 reports are a key channel for communication: affected States and others with pressing obligations should use these reports to provide full details of needs, and donor/partner states should use them to provide full details of assistance capacities and priorities.