Convention on Cluster Munitions

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Review of the status and operation of the Convention and other matters important for achieving the aims of the Convention
Clearance and destruction of cluster munitions

Protecting the environment during clearance of cluster munition remnants

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I. Introduction and Purpose

1. Escalating armed conflicts and the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss are among today's most urgent global challenges. According to the World Meteorological Organization, 2024 was the warmest year on record and each additional fraction of a degree of warming drives more harmful heatwaves; extreme rainfall events; intense droughts; melting of ice sheets, sea ice, and glaciers; heating of the ocean; and rising sea levels.[1]

2. It is imperative that the implementation of Article 4 of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) reflects these evolving concerns. The clearance of cluster munition remnants (CMR) must be conducted in ways that not only restore safety but also protect and rehabilitate the environment for affected populations.

3. This paper highlights the urgent need for stronger incorporation of environmental and climate considerations into survey and clearance. The sector is increasingly recognising its role in environmental stewardship, supported by new international mine action standards, tools, and action plans.

4. Building on the commitments in the Lausanne Action Plan, the CCM Third Review Conference in 2026 presents an opportunity to strengthen actions and indicators on the environment and climate change in the elaboration of the next five-year Action Plan. This paper outlines the key issues for affected States Parties and donors and proposes concrete actions to ensure that clearance operations are environmentally responsible and climate resilient.

* The present document was submitted after the deadline in order to reflect the most recent information.
** The present document is being issued without formal editing.
[1] World Meteorological Organization (WMO) website, "Global climate predictions show temperatures expected to remain at or near record levels in coming 5 years", 28 May 2025, at: https://bit.ly/4kX0x2v.

II. Why environment and climate matter for Article 4 implementation

5. Many areas affected by cluster munition contamination are ecologically vulnerable and face compounding risks from climate change, such as flooding, drought, soil erosion, pollution and biodiversity loss. If not carefully managed, CMR clearance can inflict significant environmental damage, degrade ecosystems, pollute water sources, contaminate soil, and contribute to deforestation. Climate change also affects the feasibility and safety of clearance operations. Changing weather patterns, extreme heat, exposure to the sun of certain ammunition, and heavy rainfall can impede access, reduce working hours, displace submunitions to new areas or areas that have already been cleared, and pose new threats to local populations.

6. Sustainable land release and post-clearance planning are critical to support environmental resilience and community well-being. Integrating climate and environmental concerns into mine action supports alignment with the humanitarian aims of the CCM and with global frameworks, goals, and treaties, including the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

III. Current developments

7. The CCM includes two references to the environment – in Article 7(1)(e)(f) on the reporting on environmental standards to be observed during the destruction of cluster munitions remnants in accordance with Article 3, and in Article 4(6)(h) on including environmental implications in Article 4 deadline extension requests. However, since the adoption of the CCM in 2008, our collective understanding of environmental and climate impacts within the mine action sector has advanced significantly.

8. Key developments include:

- The CCM Lausanne Action Plan, includes eight action points on environment and climate considerations integrated across several thematic areas:
    - Cross-cutting coordination (Action 8): Encourages States Parties to align responses in implementing the Convention with environmental protection instruments and sustainable development efforts;
    - Stockpile destruction (Actions 12 & 14): Requires the use of environmentally responsible methods that are in compliance with international standards, with plans detailing measures to minimise environmental impact;
    - Survey and clearance (Actions 21 & 23): Promotes the development and use of survey and clearance methodologies that factor in environmental impacts and prioritise areas using sustainable development and environmental criteria;
    - Risk education (Actions 27 & 30): Supports the integration of risk education into broader environmental protections efforts and the taking into account of potential risks caused by changing climatic and environmental conditions;
    - International cooperation and assistance (Action 39): Encourages the sharing of best practices on environmental impact assessments and experiences of incorporating environmental protection considerations.

9. Two indicators corresponding to these actions explicitly mention the environment and an additional five indicators corresponding to these actions support the monitoring of progress on the environment-related actions.[2]

- The revised International Mine Action Standard, IMAS 07.13, now titled “Environmental Management and Climate Change in Mine Action”, and its accompanying Technical Note, which provide detailed guidance for national mine

[2] Convention on Cluster Munitions, Lausanne Action Plan, at: https://bit.ly/4mU54V9.

action authorities (NMAAs) to define appropriate measures and elaborate a national mine action standard (NMAS).[3]

- The Green Field Tool, developed by NPA and CEOBS, is designed to support the planning and implementation of mine action field operations. The core aims of the Green Field Tool are to raise awareness on environmental issues and improve environmental practices.[4]
- The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) Siem Reap-Angkor Action Plan 2025–2029, adopted at the Fifth Review Conference in November 2024, includes 13 actions and eight indicators on the environment and climate change, and offers the potential for fostering synergies with the forthcoming action plan for the CCM.[5]
- The Environmental Issues in Mine Action (EIMA) working group brings together individuals and organisations from across the mine action sector to build and share knowledge of environmental issues and support increased engagement across the sector. The working group welcomes new members and is open to all stakeholders involved in mine action, including mine action organisations, NMAAs, donors, and commercial contractors. Online meetings are held every two months and the website's resources page is regularly updated with a range of sector relevant information.[6]

IV. Recommendations for States Parties and Stakeholders

10. Affected States Parties and NMAAs should take proactive steps to ensure that survey and clearance operations under Article 4 are conducted in ways that safeguard the environment, minimise harm, and build long-term climate resilience. Recommended actions include to:

- Employ efficient and effective land release methodologies that minimise the impact on the environment. Using non-technical survey (NTS) and technical survey (TS) to better define contaminated areas and to release areas with no contamination reduces the amount of land subject to full clearance, which might otherwise damage the environment unnecessarily;
- Include environmental and climate change considerations in national mine action strategies and have a dedicated policy on environmental management[7] with measurable indicators taking into account different realities among countries.
- Develop or update a National Mine Action Standard (NMAS) on environmental management and climate change that is aligned with the revised IMAS 07.13 and accompanying Technical Note;
- Designate an environmental focal point within the NMAA or national mine action centre to support coordination and oversight of environmental and climate change initiatives;
- Conduct environmental assessments to inform planning and implementation of survey and clearance tasks. Tools such as the Green Field Tool can assist in identifying risks and opportunities for improved environmental performance, and help identify risks from the impact of climate change;
- Implement measures to prevent or reduce environmental harm throughout all phases of mine action operations. These may include:

[3] IMAS, 07.13 Environmental management and climate change in mine action, at: https://bit.ly/4kYifCN; and Technical Note for Mine Action (TNMA) 07.13/01 Environmental management and climate change in mine action, at http://bit.ly/3SMv0EE.

[4] Environment in mine action working group, Green Field Tool resources, at: https://bit.ly/4kt5Xm6.

[5] Draft Siem Reap-Angkor Action Plan 2025–2029, APMBC, at: https://bit.ly/440qUxX.

[6] Environment in mine action working group, at: https://environmentinmineaction.org/.

[7] See Mine Action Review's 'Environmental Protection in Mine Action: A Review of Good Policy and Practice', which aims to guide policy development for national mine action authorities and mine action organisations, at: https://bit.ly/4l0Ivwr.

- Transitioning to renewable energy sources at demining camps, offices, and during field operations;
- Improving waste management, reducing single-use plastics, and enhancing recycling practices;
- Minimising the environmental impact of explosive ordnance disposal by reducing reliance on open burning and detonation (OBOD), exploring less intrusive alternatives, and supporting safe recycling of scrap metal.

- Engage affected communities, including young people,[8] in environmental planning, restoration, and climate resilience efforts, ensuring their perspectives and knowledge inform decision-making and strategy development. Where possible, partner with national environmental organisations to strengthen local ownership and expertise;
- Consider climate-related hazards and extreme weather risks—such as flooding, landslides, or prolonged heat—in the prioritisation and planning of survey and clearance. Participate in inter-ministerial processes to develop National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) plans. Such plans should include how cluster munition remnant contamination, and efforts to address it, may be impacted by climate change and climate-related hazards. Linked to this, affected States Parties should develop contingency plans that specifically address the potential impact of climate-related hazards and disasters on areas contaminated by cluster munition remnants, including for example clear procedures for emergency response, evacuation, and the safeguarding of affected communities.

V. Recommendation for Donors and Partners

11. Donors and implementing partners have a critical role in advancing environmentally responsible mine action. Recommended actions include to:

- Embed environmental criteria into funding requirements, reporting, and monitoring mechanisms to ensure accountability and support long-term environmental stewardship;[9]
- Support capacity-building and localisation efforts that strengthen national abilities to mainstream environmental and climate considerations into survey and clearance programmes;
- Provide technical and financial support to enable national programmes to conduct environmental assessments, develop environmental policies, and implement mitigation and adaptation measures;
- Invest in targeted initiatives that promote climate adaptation, renewable energy adoption, ecosystem restoration, and sustainable land use in areas contaminated with CMR.

VI. Towards the Third Review Conference: Building momentum

12. The Third Review Conference of the CCM offers a strategic opportunity to further strengthen environmental and climate considerations in mine action. To this end, States Parties should:

- Integrate strong and measurable commitments on environment and climate within the next five-year Action Plan, drawing on lessons learnt from the Lausanne Action Plan, and foster alignment with the APMBC's Siem Reap-Angkor Action Plan;

[8] Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA), Policy paper - Harnessing the Youth Dividend in Resolving the Intersecting Mine and Climate Change Action, 2025, at: http://bit.ly/440riMG.

[9] Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) and Conflict and Environment Observatory (CEOBS), Environmental reporting indicators: A framework for monitoring environmental performance in mine action, at: https://bit.ly/4l8by17.

- Enhance knowledge and build awareness of the environment and climate change across States Parties by sharing experiences, best practices, strategies, and innovations, and by establishing partnerships;
- Adopt good practice guidance, drawing on the revised IMAS, the Green Field Tool, and lessons learnt from across the sector;
- Encourage synergies with related global frameworks, goals, and treaties;
- Mainstream environmental and climate considerations alongside gender, diversity, and inclusion;
- Call for continued leadership and support to champion this agenda.

VII. Conclusion

13. Environmentally responsible clearance under Article 4 supports the humanitarian objectives of the CCM and contributes to the wider goals of peace, sustainability, and climate resilience. States Parties are encouraged to build on current momentum and ensure that environmental and climate responsibility becomes embedded in every aspect of mine action. The Third Review Conference is a pivotal moment to reflect today's environmental and climate change realities and chart a sustainable path forward for the Convention.