

14 September 2011, 'Clearance and risk reduction'

Åsa Gilbert, GICHD

Thank you Mr President and Mr Chairman,

Over the years much progress has been made in releasing land from the contamination of cluster munition remnants and there are many excellent examples where national authorities, the UN and clearance organisations have developed sound land release methodologies to address this problem. However it is also important to acknowledge that improvements are still needed, particularly on the release of land through various survey techniques in order to focus scarce clearance resources on actual contaminated land. It is also important to prevent an inflation of the problem when recording new areas suspected to be contaminated.

The first step to an efficient release of land is for the national authority to accept the concept of land release. The second step is to agreed on the procedures needed for dealing with the country specific contamination problem.

Whilst it is understood the problem with cluster munition remnants differs greatly between countries and also locally within a country, there are some key principals that can be applied in most situations. As outlined in the Australian paper on "*the application of all available methods for the efficient implementation of article 4*", explosive submunitions differ from landmines in a number of ways. The method in which they are used, their specific weapons characteristics, the failure rate, the metal content of each item and the fact that the majority of the explosive submunitions are not designed to be victim activated.

Because of these differences, faster search techniques may be used to address the contamination problem. Less sensitive detector equipment that are not sensitive enough to find AP mines, but are very effective to safely speed up the search for explosive submunitions.

Due of the fact that most explosive submunitions are not victim activated you can, when caution is applied with specialist survey and clearance personnel, walk on contaminated land. This is an obvious difference from land contaminated with anti-personnel mines.

Having the Australian paper endorsed by the state parties to the convention is an important step toward improving the overall efficiency of survey and clearance operations and to encourage national authorities and operators to use smarter, faster and more cost effective methodologies in order to release land safely.

Thank you!