

THE SECOND MEETING OF STATES PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON CLUSTER MUNITIONS

Clearance and risk reduction

Beirut, Lebanon

15 September 2011

Statement by Norway

Check against delivery

Mme president

With a few highly significant exceptions, contamination by cluster munition remnants is a fairly limited problem. This is confirmed by the information provided by the Beirut Progress Report, and supported by the most recent fact sheet from the Cluster Munition Monitor. While we indeed must recognize the severe threat against people and communities that cluster munition remnants represent, the overall situation is fortunately very different from the global landmine problem a decade ago.

For most of contaminated states it should be possible to address the problem within years and not decades. For those few heavily affected states the challenge is of a different magnitude, and clearance will take longer. Our common responsibility is to make all efforts in supporting those states with Article 4 obligations so they can identify and clear the contaminated areas as soon as possible.

In this work we must not repeat the errors made in the early phase of humanitarian mine action that resulted in vast overestimation of contaminated areas. We still struggle with the impact of these errors, and significant resources have been wasted on meaningless projects that should have been used to remove mines from the ground and other lifesaving actions.

We also need to adapt the responses to the actual problem at hand. One example is the question of how to address situations of very limited contamination, where building national capacities, developing and adopting standards and other features associated with a national mine action program might be out of proportion to the actual problem.

At this point, we would like to refer to the excellent paper prepared for this meeting on the application of all available methods for implementation of Article 4. In our view the paper effectively and accurately presents current knowledge of how best to address the Article 4 challenges. We fully support the approach in the paper as well as its recommendations.

Mme president

Finally, allow me to update you on the situation at the former test firing range at Hjerkin in Norway, which is contaminated by cluster munition remnants. The clearance operation continues and the primary target area is now finished. Currently Norwegian army engineers are searching the outer perimeter of the area using mine detection dogs. This area is marked and fenced to inform civilians and to exclude access to the suspected dangerous area. The operations will probably stop at the end of September due to expected snow, and will commence again when conditions permit in the spring of 2012. The Ministry of Defence estimates that clearance will be complete no later than 2013. Norway will keep States Parties and others informed of the progress of this operation.

Thank you