



**Fourth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on Cluster
Munitions
10 – 13 September 2013**

GICHD Statement on Clearance

Thank you Mr Chair,

Official estimates to conclude clearance operations of all Explosive Remnants of War in some countries affected by cluster munitions are cited at over 100 years – even several hundred years at current funding levels. This can be misleading in the context of Article 4 of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

While many mine-affected states deal with a contamination problem that is essentially 2-dimensional – countries that suffer from cluster munitions typically deal with a 3-D problem which also includes conventional bombs buried at depth ... often down to several metres. This is a major impediment to effective survey and rapid clearance operations - if land is to be released in one go for all purposes... including major construction works.

The components of contamination that has greatest humanitarian impact – and are associated with the CCM (and APMBC) - are restricted to surface and shallow contamination and thus there is a requirement to differentiate between surface and deeper contamination - if clearance of Cluster Munition is to be undertaken in a realistic timeframe.

When considering current and recent conflict zones, it is easy to forget just how intense the twentieth century wars in Europe were, and how relevant the experience gained when dealing with the explosive remnants of those wars can be for other countries today. There are existing policies and practices in place in many of the donor nations still affected by WWII contamination that can be drawn upon to more effectively manage long term residual contamination elsewhere. This includes experience of

practical approaches for addressing contamination threats at varying depths over different timeframes..

THE BRITISH EXPERIENCE

Around 90,000 sorties were flown by aircraft targeting the United Kingdom during WWII where more than 62,000 tons of high explosive bombs were dropped. Over one million buildings were destroyed or damaged.

UXO of many types appear every year in different parts of the UK. Responses to finds of UXO come under a range of general legislation covering safety and environmental regulations. The UK Construction Industry Standards, for instance, provides guidance on UXO for developers.

Mitigation measures ahead of the construction work of the London Olympic facilities are a good example of recent developments that had to contend with land contaminated with UXO.

THE GERMAN EXPERIENCE

The German experience of bombing during WWII was more intense and sustained, and major ground fighting also left a much more widespread legacy of surface and shallow contamination. Two million tons of ordnance was dropped with an estimated 100,000 unexploded bombs remaining on present day German territory. 4 to 8 large bombs are unearthed every year in Berlin alone.

Legal frameworks for clearance and survey activities in Germany today vary - and fall under a range of Federal and State laws.

The purpose of this Statement is to remind donors and national authorities not to forget the experience from Europe - as daunting timelines presented today for ERW clearance can be broken down into palatable phases. These favour the prioritization of clearance of Cluster Munition Remnants while

establishing more sustainable and commercially-driven models of practice - to address longer-term residual contamination - mostly associated with deep buried bombs.

GICHD STUDY

With this in mind, the GICHD is currently undertaking a process of documenting policies and practices in place in Europe today for the benefit of more recently affected states.

A working group composed of donors, the UN, NGOs, British and German consultants and representatives from 5 commercial operators undertaking EOD activities in Europe met in London last week to help shape Phase II of this GICHD-led project. This included discussions on:

- Expanding research outside UK and Germany to include a boarder base of European countries - France, Belgium, Italy, Finland and others where relevant information may be readily at hand - perhaps to include Japan
- A comparison of WWII & Vietnam era UXO & review of aging of bombs
- Clear documentation of all relevant regulations and policies developed since 1945 - especially approaches that favour a reactive response to UXO finds (rather than extensive proactive searches for them)
- Risk management models used to help guide decisions in the European context will also be reviewed.
- The meeting finished with a discussion on how States affected by cluster munition contamination can be involved and asked to contribute to the study in order to encourage the adoption of appropriate practices

The project is planned to be completed in time for the 5th Meeting of State Parties in 2014. We believe it is an important exercise that will help focus resources and priorities to address IHL imperatives - while using the European experience to help charter a course that reduces dependency on international aid in a shorter timeframe than one may expect.

Thank you Mr Chair.