

## OPENING PRESENTATION STATEMENT – GENERAL ODIEMI

Mr Coordinator,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First please let me congratulate the Presidency and thank them for the excellent organisation of this conference and for hosting us in Costa Rica. Thanks also to the Coordinators for their work in preparing today's exchange on the topic and inclusion of this presentation on the agenda.

As everyone will be aware, there has been contamination on Lebanese territories from almost all types of cluster munitions. The hostilities in 2006 saw one of the most concentrated deployment of cluster munitions in the last decade. Lebanon has been actively committed to the Convention since its outset, and to achieving our obligations, particularly those relating to Articles four and six. We provided updates to States Parties on Lebanon's progress in the fields of survey and clearance in Zambia last year and also through our national reports.

Last year in Lusaka, Lebanon provided an overview of the LMAC strategy, including clearance priorities and the findings of a post-clearance survey in the south of the country. The survey showed that 78% of released land was used for agriculture and 15% for pasture, with the remainder being used for residential and infrastructure development. In summary, it demonstrated the positive impact that clearance has on communities in Lebanon and the importance of task prioritisation.

This presentation introduces the findings of a survey initiative that has taken place in Lebanon since the 4<sup>th</sup> MSP. It has been undertaken by the Mines Advisory Group (MAG), coordinated by the LMAC and with the support of the United Kingdom. The initiative was initially designed as a socio-economic impact assessment. It aimed to support and improve the task prioritisation process so that tasks with the maximum impact on people and communities are cleared first. During the trial phase, the potential to incorporate elements of non-technical survey were identified, particularly the opportunity to more accurately assess areas of remaining cluster munition contamination.

Mr Bekim Shala from MAG will give a more detailed overview of the survey findings in a few moments. I would like to draw out three key findings.

Firstly, the survey should leave no doubt in anyone's mind that cluster munition continue to have a negative daily impact on civilians in Lebanon. This is felt overwhelmingly in at least 111 agricultural communities of the south, the Bekaa and Mount Lebanon. It also affects

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over 50,000 refugees from the Syrian crisis. In 81% of the remaining tasks surveyed, contamination still makes access to resources unsafe or blocks them altogether. The survey findings can assist in planning so that every effort can be made to prioritise tasks with maximum impact.

Secondly, the survey has recommended that 96 tasks are considered for land release through cancellation. The LMAC is currently reviewing the recommendations and we hope that it will be possible to use the survey's findings to focus clearance resources on areas with strong evidence of contamination.

Thirdly, and as Lebanon has stated many times previously, cooperation and assistance from the international community has been critical to the significant progress that Lebanon has made so far. The survey has assisted in showing that task that still remains and the importance of continued international support to achieving it – particularly clearance organisations working in Lebanon.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the United Kingdom for enabling this survey to take place, as well as to Australia for supporting the publication of the survey report here in Costa Rica. I would like to invite Mr Shala from MAG to give a more detailed overview of the survey and the recommendations that are already being discussed with LMAC.

**ENDS**