

Statement on Clearance
Sixth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions
Geneva, 5 September 2016



Thank you Mr. President.

In 2015, over 120,000 submunitions were destroyed during clearance of more than 70km² of contaminated area, as cited in Cluster Munition Monitor. The fact that the number of submunitions cleared almost doubled compared to 2014, despite the total area of land cleared being slightly lower, suggests that clearance operations have become better targeted. With the application of efficient land release methodology, continued funding, and requisite political will, all but the most heavily contaminated States Parties should be able to meet their Article 4 clearance deadlines, without the need for an extension. We commend those States Parties that have already completed clearance, or which are on track to do so ahead of their convention deadlines.

Unfortunately, however, as things stand today too many affected States Parties are not on schedule to fulfil their Article 4 obligations within the ten-year deadline – something that should be unacceptable to all States Parties and to all that have a stake in the success of the Convention. It is also unnecessary given that, as a sector, we possess the operational tools and expertise needed to succeed, coupled with generous donor support in most countries.

The importance of applying efficient land release principles has been stated repeatedly by the CMC, its membership, and the broader mine action community. While the concept is now far better understood, it is still not being applied systematically in several countries. Crucial to efficient land release is the application of high-quality, evidence-based survey, to confirm areas that contain cluster munition remnants, and to discredit suspected hazardous areas that do not. Clearance should not be undertaken in the absence of strong evidence obtained through technical or non-technical survey. To do so is a waste of already limited resource and capacity. Drawing on good survey enables expensive clearance resources to be targeted to areas that actually contain remnants. Also of central importance is the need for states to determine an accurate baseline of the extent of cluster munition remnant contamination, and a strategic plan to address it. Again, a worrying number of States Parties have yet to do this.

In order to ensure states complete Article 4 implementation as soon as possible, and in any event within the convention deadline, we must do our utmost to help ensure efficient land release methodologies are used by every programme. This will require effective partnerships between clearance operators (both international and national), national authorities, and international donors, to ensure an evidence- and risk-based approach is applied to efforts to tackle cluster munition remnant contamination. This is now occurring in the world's most contaminated state: Laos.

It will also require careful analysis, on a country-by-country basis, to identify remaining challenges, and how best to address them, so that finite resources can be targeted in a more efficient manner. In this regard, we remind all stakeholders to consider assessments of and recommendations for each national mine action programme, based on indicators that reflect

international good practice, as found in “Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants”, a publication of the Mine Action Review.

Let us not lose sight of the fact that the primary objective of Article 4 is to remove cluster munition remnants in order to prevent loss of lives and limbs, and to allow land to be used safely, free from fear. Let us not fail the men, women, and children who rely on their governments and the international mine action community to make completion of cluster munition clearance a reality.