

Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Intersessional meetings, April, 2012, Geneva

Norwegian statement on clearance, Tuesday 17 April

Thank you, Mr Coordinator.

We would like to thank those organisations and states – both States Parties and others - that have provided us with useful presentations from the field today on surveying and clearance procedures. Such presentations demonstrate that there is a vast amount of knowledge and experience to build on related to surveying, clearance and release of land. The presentations also clarify that with a few notable exceptions, the global magnitude of the challenge is limited and many of the affected states should be able to complete their clearance obligations under Article 4 well within their deadlines. Our discussions should therefore focus on how to overcome concrete and individual obstacles, recognising that there is not one single blueprint solution to fulfilling Article 4. However, some common principles should guide our work.

First, the resources must be spent as effectively and efficiently as possible. The available resources are limited and we must make the most of it – and the more efficient we are, the sooner land will be safe to use.

Second, following from this principle –the full range of available methods, tailored to address the actual problem at hand, must be employed. This includes the use of non-technical and technical survey as well as clearance. Ideally, only land that is actually contaminated by cluster munitions remnants should be defined as clearance tasks, thus reducing to a minimum clearance of land that is not contaminated

Third, everything must be reported. No suspected contaminated land should be surveyed, cleared, cancelled or released without being reported and recorded in a national database. Only in this way can one make certain that there will be no duplication of effort now or in the future. We would like to stress the importance of demanding that commercial operators follow the same procedures as humanitarian operators – and to make adherence to this principle a precondition for accreditation.

Fourth, such a national database must be the property of a national authority that needs this overview in order to plan and prioritise. In some situations in heavily

affected states, prioritisation might be difficult. For example, spending time on surveying could seem to be in conflict with the wish to clear and release land as quickly as possible for use for agricultural or other purposes. However, in national planning processes it is essential to not only think in short terms – and we know from lessons learned in the past the cost of not having solid evidence bases for the long-term clearance efforts. Proper surveying will also ensure greater efficiency in the long term by identifying more exactly which areas actually need clearance, thereby avoiding spending resources on clearing uncontaminated land. And, in addition, surveying also builds confidence and provides safety by identifying the areas that pose a risk to civilians.

Chair,

Nothing in this is controversial. These are principles that all agree to, and that many have spoken about today. But it is a timely reminder that there is no single blueprint solution to how a State Party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions should fulfil its Article 4 obligations.

Realities in the field must be what guides our work at the multilateral level. In the same vein, the purposes and objectives that we agree at the multilateral level must be followed up by all states and operators in the field. It is obvious that when all partners pull in the same direction – even if they use ropes in different colours and materials – progress will improve.

The collective competence and capacity among states, international organisations and civil society on how to address contamination by cluster munition remnants will help us solve the problem in years rather than decades, as long as we learn from lessons in the past and continue to be guided by the real and concrete problem in the field.

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