



Clearance and Risk Education

Tuesday 17 April 2012

Mr. Coordinator,

I am delivering the following statement on behalf of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group for Mine Action (IACG-MA) comprising 14 UN entities involved in mine action.

According to the Cluster Munitions Monitor, 31 countries and territories are believed to have cluster munitions remnants, only half of which are either States Parties or Signatories to the Convention. According to the same source, the following might be countries and territories experiencing with more extensive cluster munitions remnant contamination: Lao PDR, Vietnam, Iraq, Cambodia, the Nagorno-Karabach of Azerbaijan, the disputed territory of Western Sahara, Serbia, Lebanon, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Mauritania, Kosovo and South Sudan. Of these, less than half are either States Parties or Signatories to the CCM.

The United Nations is assisting in clearance and risk education activities in more than half of the cluster munitions affected countries¹, inclusive of States Parties, signatories and non States Parties. We aim to continue our support to national efforts to eliminate cluster munitions remnants in these countries, as was the case with Albania and Zambia which are now free from cluster munitions remnants.

To this end, and bearing in mind the 10-year deadline for Article 4 obligations, we would encourage all cluster munitions affected States Parties to develop a realistic plan for CM clearance. Plans should start from a clear baseline, for which adequate survey, assessment and recording of threat has been undertaken necessary in order to identify all contaminated areas under the relevant State's jurisdiction and control.

We note that Actions #12 and #13 in the CCM Vientiane Action Plan call for States Parties to endeavour to identify the possible locations and sizes of all cluster munitions contaminated areas within one year of entry into force for each specific State Party. On this basis, States can prioritize clearance and risk education, based on the assessed level of impact, report as required by Article 7, as well as develop and implement national clearance plans.

¹ Afghanistan, Angola, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Chad, Croatia, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Mauritania, Mozambique, Sudan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uganda and Yemen.

Among cluster munitions-affected States Parties currently receiving UN assistance in mine action, Actions #12 and #13 of the Vientiane Action Plan are applicable so far to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon and Lao PDR. While these three States Parties have provided abundant information on cluster munitions contaminated areas, only Lebanon has included in its Article 7 report the Lebanon national mine action strategy 2011-2020, which includes a strategic plan with benchmarks. The strategy does not apply uniquely to cluster munitions remnants, as mines and other ERW are also included in the plan. The Lebanese case could serve as a model for the preparation of plans that adhere to the 10-year deadline, if not sooner, by other affected States Parties. Actions #12 and #13 will also soon be relevant to other UN-assisted countries in mine action, such as Afghanistan, Cote d'Ivoire and Mauritania.

As stressed many times in the last days, land release techniques including non-technical survey and technical survey should be employed to this end, before employing clearance techniques. The use of land release techniques should bear in mind the differences in design and impact between mines and cluster munitions remnants, and should be consistent with relevant international standards. These requirements should also apply for risk reduction education.

The United Nations would like to encourage more states to provide updates on progress in the implementation of the national plans and on the challenges encountered. This would allow and facilitate amendments and corrections to be addressed, if required, including on the basis of newly available national and international resources.

The development of comprehensive national strategic plans that apply effective, context-specific and appropriate land release methods has also been identified as key challenge by the Beirut Progress Report.

While these discussions have focused almost exclusively on clearance, it is important to remember that Article 4 also includes specific obligations to undertake risk reduction programming in affected areas. Risk Reduction Education plays a critical and important life-saving role in enabling individuals, families and communities to live as safely as possible in contaminated areas, and in reducing the number of casualties until weapons have been cleared.

The United Nations remains available to assist cluster munitions affected countries in developing their strategic national plans. The IACG-MA Completion Initiative can help affected States Parties in complying with their Article 4 obligations in a timely manner, in particular where relatively small additional resources could ensure the earliest possible completion.

Thank you. Mr. Coordinator