



**United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action
(IACG-MA)
Intersessional Meeting of the Convention on Cluster Munitions
Geneva 15-18 April 2013**

Statement on Clearance and Risk Reduction

**Delivered by the United Nations IACG-MA
17 April 2013**

Mr. Coordinators (*Lao PDR and Ireland*),

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

The United Nations supports mine clearance, risk reduction, and risk education in over twenty States Parties or signatories to the Convention¹ in addition to a number of non-States Parties and territories.

The United Nations reiterates its commitment to support affected countries to comply with their obligations under Article 4 as early as possible, including in the development and implementation of respective national strategic plans to fulfill their obligations within respective 10-year deadlines, or less.

This support would not be possible without the critical and sustained financial assistance of the international community. Clearance operations within a specific timeframe are not just another obligation in the Convention. Clearance is what ultimately eliminates any future humanitarian impact from cluster munitions. However, the effectiveness of these efforts relies in one part on obtaining predictable funding. Therefore, the United Nations would like to continue to encourage donors to consider sustained funding and even multi-year funding arrangements, especially to support implementation of national plans based on clear targets and benchmarks.

Article 4 also touches on obligations related to risk reduction. Even where clearance operations are taking place or, more importantly, where such activities are not yet feasible, risk education and risk reduction are critical to ensuring awareness among civilians of the threats posed by cluster munitions remnants and other ERW, and to help them manage and reduce risk until clearance is completed.

Furthermore, and applicable for all mine action stakeholders, the United Nations notes that the establishment of injury surveillance systems can make a significant contribution to strengthening of mine action programmes.

¹ Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Chad, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea Bissau, Iraq, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Uganda. The following eight States Parties and signatories are contaminated in different degrees by cluster munitions remnants and receive support from the United Nations: Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo and Iraq.

National injury surveillance systems, used to systematically collect and analyze data on victim-activated explosions, provide invaluable data as to the magnitude and nature of the impact of ERW.

This data can be used to:

- identify the most dangerous times and areas that should be prioritized for clearance and targeting of MRE;
- identify the demographics of those in the population most at-risk; and
- identify the types of cluster munitions and other ERW involved, so to continuously adapt MRE messaging and adjust prioritization of clearance as needed.

Any surveillance system should also take care to integrate age and gender considerations where relevant; and thereby design interventions addressing vulnerabilities of specific population groups according to their needs.

Mr. Coordinators,

The United Nations appreciates having the opportunity to provide some initial feedback on the very useful draft working paper circulated by Norway on Compliance with Article 4 of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

The draft paper represents a welcome, proactive approach. Being able to consider questions such as the ones posed therein at this early stage of implementation of the convention has an enormous value in setting expectations for all stakeholders and in bringing further clarity to the process of ‘declaring completion’.

The United Nations notes the efforts made to apply best practices so far, as gained not only through the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention but also in the areas of clearance and survey as well as information management and surveillance.

It is our sincere hope that outlining such a systematic approach to Article 4 implementation will limit the number of extension requests, improve the quality of completion plans and completion reporting, and ensure that no reservations are expressed on the declarations made by affected States Parties.

We would like to stress the critical importance of the collection of good quality and verifiable data. This is achieved not only through sound survey techniques but also through effective surveillance techniques, including related to injury surveillance. Perhaps this point could be expanded further in the draft paper reference made to surveillance as another type of systematic action.

In terms of specific points, we would like to mention a few here.

On page 3 “the second question” on what constitutes “every effort” goes into detail on differentiating between different categories of explosive contamination and different methodologies to deal with it. As mentioned during the presentation at the Technical Working Group on Clearance using the case of Lao PDR, there are different approaches and methodologies required for demining minefields and for clearing UXO in Battle Area Clearance. When UXO Lao refined their techniques a few years ago their productivity increased significantly. A lesson we should all learn from.

Paragraph 5 on page 3 mentions “to ensure operational integrity of the information in the database, the evidence-threshold for including areas in their database SHOULD be high... procedures SHOULD be in place to ensure that data is systematically maintained and updated.” While States, for understandable reasons may not wish to strengthen this paragraph by substituting the word “SHOULD“ with “SHALL”, we would suggest strengthening this paragraph somehow as we consider it critical that good information goes into the bottom end of a database to enable good quality evidence based analysis at the top.

The shift presented in the draft text from polygons to point reference will no doubt help diminish exaggerations of the size of contaminated areas and as such contribute towards better information. We would also like to recall that mine action databases often have proven inadequate in effectively assisting good planning and priority setting. This is partly because of missing information but also due to poor information quality in the first place as well as poor information management and understanding the subsequent need for good information analysis.

Moving to page 4, the draft paper describes actions the State will take if previously unknown cluster munitions contamination is identified after completion. Section B is good logical thinking, but in addition, we suggest that a resubmission of the declaration of compliance, as described in section A, would be needed once the work of clearing newly discovered cluster munitions remnants is done. Accordingly, perhaps consideration of an additional sub-subsection IV (4) should be added stating that a new declaration of compliance would be needed in order to “close” the item once and for all.

The United Nations remains available for further consultations as required.

Thank you.