

## Convention on Cluster Munitions

### Technical Workshop on Cooperation and Assistance

Monday 15 April

Presentation by Norway, Senior Advisor Ingunn Vatne, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Thank you for the invitation to present the Norwegian perspective on funding for stockpile destruction and victim assistance. As the Coordinator mentioned, I work in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, specifically in the Section for Humanitarian Affairs in the Department for UN, Peace and Humanitarian Affairs.

The Section for Humanitarian Affairs is responsible for humanitarian disarmament, including the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Mine Ban Convention. This responsibility includes policy development, multilateral work, and support to the implementation of both Conventions in states which need assistance – that is to say, we are responsible for grants given to partners to clear contaminated areas, to destroy stockpiles, and to assist victims. In our view, this integrated approach makes our work more effective – it ensures that our policy work is informed by the field implementation that we fund, and it ensures that the projects we support are informed by the policies we develop.

Norway takes its obligation under Article 6 of both Conventions to provide assistance seriously and we are continuously striving to identify the most effective partnerships. Relevant assistance is not only financial, but also technical and material – something which is important to bear in mind. In this sense, international cooperation and assistance under the Convention on Cluster Munitions goes well beyond the traditional donor/recipient relationship. In fact, there is broad agreement among both States parties and the broader implementation community that all States are in a position to provide some sort of relevant assistance.

Overall, international financial support for mine action has been consistently high for more than a decade, even if there might have been a reduction in certain areas. What we have seen is that states that have given increased political and domestic priority to mine action, have been able to maintain and even increase the international support for their mine action programmes. Norway remains committed to providing substantial support for the implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Our resources are, however, finite. We have to prioritise. With the overarching objective of preventing further harm and human suffering from landmines and cluster munitions, we have devised the following guiding criteria:

1. We must see a clear commitment from national authorities to take ownership of the problem and its solutions. Mine action priorities need to be reflected in overall national priorities.
2. Plans must be concrete, updated and reflect needs on the ground. We want our taxpayers' money to finance activities that reduce human suffering and enable development. To this end there must be a clear relationship between the actual humanitarian needs, and requests made for assistance.
3. Partners must express willingness to design their projects in the most up-to-date manner, building on the latest understanding of, for example, what victim assistance entails and how stockpile destruction can be most effective.
4. We prioritise projects in States that have chosen to support the Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions by becoming States parties, thereby making a legal commitment to destroy all stockpiles and assist victims in a non-discriminatory and inclusive manner.

Let me be a little more specific on the two issues that are at the center of discussions today; stockpile destruction and victim assistance.

Reporting from States parties over the past two to three years indicates that most States parties with Article 3 obligations will fulfill their goals well within the initial eight-year deadline, and that destruction is less expensive than expected. This is important. The destruction of stockpiled cluster munitions ensures they will never be used, thus preventing future harm. A key element in achieving early completion of stockpile destruction is to make use of all the opportunities for international cooperation and assistance in the Convention, and to explore the gains of technical cooperation both at the international and at regional levels. States parties with stockpiles to destroy can draw valuable lessons from other States parties with similar challenges.

However, there is no blueprint on how destruction can be done. Projects and plans must be concrete and tailored to meet the specific challenges that individual states face. Norway has already supported such successful stockpile destruction projects through Norwegian People's Aid – and their SHADOW programme which was referred to in the technical workshop on stockpile destruction this morning. We also have some experience with different types of partnerships such as bilateral support or assistance through other organisations, including for the destruction of stockpiles of landmines. From Norway's side we are interested in working with partners to ensure completion of a state's Article 3 obligations, and we welcome proposals to this effect. We are flexible with regard to funding mechanisms, and welcome innovative partnership ideas – but, again, let me emphasise that national commitment as well as documented and specified needs must be the basis.

Victim assistance is in many ways more complicated than clearance and stockpile destruction, something which the previous technical workshop demonstrated. The CCM and the Vientiane Action Plan set out an ambitious agenda for assistance to cluster munition victims.

Norway engages in victim assistance through cooperative partnerships with affected states, civil society and international organisations. For many years we have provided dedicated funding for projects assisting victims of cluster munitions, landmines and other explosive remnants of war – through the ICRC’s mine action appeal, its Special Fund for Disabled, Survivor Networks, and through civil society organisations providing trauma care, peer support and socio-economic activities, and organisations involved in advocacy work. As the understanding of victim assistance has developed over the past decades, so have our implementing partners and their projects developed.

Most projects which were so-called “earmarked” for victims of mines and explosive remnants of war are today actually inclusive of all persons with disabilities and similar needs – which is of course the right approach, but does make it difficult to identify the funds allocated to supporting victims of cluster munitions or other explosives. We will continue to support these organisations from our humanitarian budget because of the results they deliver. However, at this point in time, we do not believe that the continuation of dedicated funding for victim assistance is sufficient – or even the most effective way - to ensure the full realisation of the rights of the victims and their inclusion in their communities.

In addition to the dedicated funding from our humanitarian budget, Norway supports the development of competent and effective institutions in the health and social sectors of many affected countries. The importance of such assistance should not be underestimated, even though it is difficult to monitor exactly to what degree victims of mines and cluster munitions are included and benefit from the projects. The CCM, as well as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, commits us to never discriminate between victims of cluster munitions, and those who have suffered injuries and disabilities from other causes. That requires a broad engagement and an approach to assistance that is not limited to victims of cluster munitions.

In our view, the victim assistance obligations that we have as States parties to the CCM must be fulfilled mostly through including cluster munition victims in all relevant sectors, processes and development projects. First and foremost this must happen at the national level and in the field – which it already often does even though there are definitely challenges in many countries. At the international level, we, States parties to the CCM, could perhaps divert some of our attention away from discussing victim assistance within weapon-specific fora to ensuring the inclusion of cluster munition

victims in other multilateral fora addressing for example human rights and health issues and corresponding funding mechanisms. I'm looking forward to the next presentation.

Last year, an independent evaluation was conducted on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in Norwegian development and humanitarian assistance. The evaluation provided a set of recommendations, which are now being followed up by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation. There are many lessons learned, and quite some way to go until we can truly say that our international cooperation is fully inclusive of persons with disabilities. The Section for Humanitarian Affairs will continue to promote the inclusion of victims of mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war in the Ministry's general work to promote the rights of persons with disabilities internationally - and in our own development assistance.

To conclude: Taking a rights-based, non-discriminatory and inclusive approach to victim assistance – which we as the mine action community have agreed in principle for many years – must have as its consequence that we at some point stop discussing assistance to victims of specific weapons in separate fora depending on which weapon caused the injury, and rather spend more time and resources making sure that the victims of mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war are included in other influential fora which might have a more direct bearing on the situation of victims than our own plenary discussions..

In addition, we must conclude that funding projects dedicated to or earmarked for assisting victims of weapons might be contradictory to the principle of non-discrimination. It is therefore my prediction that in the coming years we will see a downward trend in funds identified as dedicated to assisting victims of landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war – but that more and more states, including donors such as Norway, will strive to ensure that their development cooperation is inclusive of all persons with disabilities.

And, finally, to come back to one of my initial points – clear commitment from national authorities to take ownership of their challenges and find long-term solutions is a precondition for successful implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, including Article 5. However, the obligation to provide cooperation and assistance in Article 6 demonstrates that no individual State party should have to bear its burden alone – on the contrary, the partnerships that underpinned the Convention continue and Norway will be there for the long haul. As a community, we just have to adapt to shifting realities and build on increased understanding to make the most effective use of our resources to continue preventing future harm.

Thank you.