

## **Session 2 – The Country Coalition Concept**

As I already said in my opening statement we as the Presidency of the CCM were thinking at the outset of our mandate of initiatives which could provide some lasting impetus to challenges our convention is facing, notably to help implementing the ambitious objectives of the Dubrovnik Action Plan which was adopted at the first review conference of the CCM in 2015. After having consulted with CMC, the ISU and some like-minded partners we identified coordination and assistance as a crucial bottleneck for successful implementation of the CCM objectives. Some of you might wonder if behind this technical term of country coalitions constitutes something entirely new is hiding. I would answer this question with yes and no. Yes, if you refer to a new coordinated approach to bringing all relevant actors for implementation of CCM obligations under one umbrella and no, as these kind of initiatives have existed before in various contexts, various organizations under various technical terms.

So let me briefly outline what we intend to achieve with this concept and how it is supposed to work. We hope that this initiative helps us to unite all relevant existing and potential actors in mine action in an informal framework of a country coalition. Such coalitions would, of course include representatives of the affected country, partnering states, international organizations, civil society and non-governmental organizations as well as operators on the ground and other relevant experts, such as the GICHD and the ICRC. In principle the country coalitions would be coordinated by the affected country themselves together with a partner country in order to promote a more comprehensive approach to the country's specific challenges which should include all aspects of mine action, covering destruction of stocks, mine clearance in all its aspects, victim assistance, land release and mine education.

While cooperation and coordination at the level of states is important, it cannot be reiterated often enough that it is imperative for the work at grassroots level. Because it is at the grass-root level we see the most tangible effects of our work: that affected people are able get their lands back so they can live and work on them safely to the benefit of individuals, communities, regions and states, that communities are educated to live with the risks of contaminated areas and that victims are granted all necessary aid and support. We as the Presidency can only give the right input to this kind of networking which should start at the international/institutional level but needs to be fine-tuned at the level of affected communities.

So the country coalitions would rest on the initiative of affected countries and the respective support of donor countries as well as various implementing organizations. They should also be open to input from civil society and the very affected communities. While this approach is not new and rather simple the devil is as so often in the detail and the detail in this case is practical implementation. We have thus tried to kick-start a series of seminars in order to introduce the concept and use them already as platforms for building such country coalitions.

Additionally we have elaborated the concept of establishing so called “country coalitions”. The idea was - with a country specific focus – to set up a framework for improved international cooperation among all relevant actors. I will talk about this more in detail in our dedicated session.

This is already the second workshop we have organized to promote the country coalition concept. While we identified South East Asia as the first regional focus we have now chosen South East Europe as the venue for this workshop as we know about the relevance and urgency of the Cluster Munitions issues here as well. South East European countries are the most affected countries in terms of contamination with Cluster Munition and respective drastic economic losses in Europe. Accordingly they also are confronted with numerous victims and human suffering from this kind of inhuman weaponry. On top we have invited a couple of countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America who are facing article 3 (stockpile destruction) and 4 (land clearance) deadlines and related problems because we think they might also profit from this discussion and we can raise some synergies between regions this way.

We very much hope that this workshop will enable you as affected countries to gather further inspiration and incentives to tackle the challenges just mentioned more effectively and efficiently and to garner more international support for your respective endeavors. We count on your initiative to seize the potential arising from the political support of this event but also the practical networking opportunities. I would like to stress that we as the Presidency of the Convention on Cluster Munition can only kick off certain processes and render our support to concrete projects. In the end they have to fit into coherent national strategies and become self-sustaining. I am convinced that this seminar will give some valuable input in this regard as sizable “coalition of the willing” assembled today which is eager to tackle the challenges their regions, countries and people are facing.

Let me in at the end of my introduction once again underline the valuable but dangerous work the actual demining action constitutes. So we owe it to those risking their lives and notably those who have paid the highest price in the daily battle to reclaim lost land that we do our jobs here at the institutional level thoroughly. We need not only to mobilize the necessary resources but also give the best possible guidance so that relevant actors can do the necessary clearance work safely, effectively and to the very benefit of affected communities.

I think everything is set for a positive outcome so I look forward to having fruitful discussions and interesting meetings and I wish us all success.