



Seminar Final Report on

“Cooperating to implement the CCM: The country coalition concept”

16 - 17 March 2017 - Bangkok, Thailand

REPORT SUMMARY

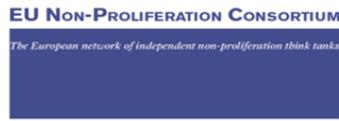
The South East Asia regional seminar on “Cooperating to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions: the country coalition concept” was held at the UNESCAP complex in Bangkok, Thailand, on 16 to 17 March 2017. The seminar was the initiative of the Permanent Representation of Germany to the Conference on Disarmament in its role as President of the 7th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. It was jointly organised by the European External Action Service through the EU Non-proliferation Consortium, and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) with the support of the Implementation Support Unit of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (ISU-CCM). The seminar was funded by the European Union.

The seminar was attended by representatives of 7 regional States – Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Also participating were representatives of EU member States, international organizations, non-governmental experts and civil society from the South-East Asia region.

Participating as resource persons were representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA) and the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC). The Geneva-based Implementation Support Units of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (ISU-CCM) and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (ISU-APMBC) also provided technical their input to the workshop.

The purpose of the seminar was to discuss future developments impacting the implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) with a specific focus on the concept of establishing “country coalitions” (i.e. with a country specific focus) as a means to enhance international cooperation and thus support the implementation of the Convention in South-East Asia. A coordinated approach concerning destruction and clearance (including mapping and securing of contaminated areas) of cluster munitions and assisting victims, involving donor states and operators would support States Parties to fulfil their commitments under the Convention. Furthermore, it envisioned that a country specific approach is required to help ensure progress in implementation of the CCM.

Some of the main challenges faced by States in the region were the lack of adequate resources whether financial, technical or human. Other challenges noted included were limited access to contaminated areas, border demarcation, inadequate infrastructure and blockages to developmental projects.



The seminar ended with participants noting some important aspects of a successful country coalitions initiative and considered how best to proceed in this regard.

Background

Due to several conflicts in its past, the South-East Asia region has the heaviest cluster munition contamination in the world. While the region only has a few States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), it includes several and Non-States Parties countries which are also addressing cluster munition contamination and clearance, stockpile destruction as well as provision of assistance to victims of explosive weapons. Within this region, Lao PDR, Vietnam and Cambodia are all dealing with very high levels of contamination with CCM state Party, Lao PDR, recording the highest levels of contamination.

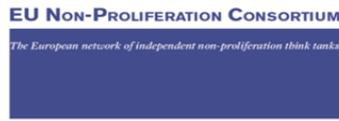
While the impact of cluster munition contamination may seem local, in fact, this contamination has a broader impact on the security and economic development of the entire region. As a region where many countries have suffered from contamination from landmines and explosive remnants of war, this impact can be well understood, even beyond the countries directly impacted by cluster munitions. And the experience gained in clearing other victim-activated explosive devices can serve to further efforts to clear Asian countries of these deadly killers.

Against this backdrop the concept of establishing “country coalitions” as a means to enhance international cooperation and thus promote the CCM seems to have considerable potential.

Opening Session – Setting the Scene

The Workshop opened with the delivery of statements from representatives of Germany and the European Union.

In his opening statement, Ambassador Michael Biontino of Germany and President of the 7th Meeting of States Parties (7MSP) to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) expressed his gratitude to the participants for accepting the invitation to be part of the seminar and outlined the overall objectives of German CCM Presidency. He highlighted that in this regard, the seminar was an attempt at exploring the implementation of the CCM so as to enhance its humanitarian impact globally as well as to become an integral part of universally accepted International Humanitarian Law. The CCM presidency aimed to achieve this aim through a number of initiatives such as the “structured dialogue approach” it was using to engage States Not Party to the CCM but also through its “country coalitions concept” which was proposed to have a country specific focus in a framework that provided for improved international cooperation amongst all relevant actors. He further elaborated that it was hoped that this concept would unite all existing and potential actors in an informal framework within the affected country. He emphasised that in principle the affected country would coordinate the initiative.



He also explained that the South East Asia region had been selected for the initial seminar as it was well aware of the relevance and urgency of the issue of cluster munitions. Not only were South East Asian countries among the most affected by cluster munitions contamination which had an adverse effect on their economic well-being but they also the ones with the most victims that had suffered from the inhuman weaponry. It was in this vein that the seminar would enable affected States to forge the necessary coalitions that would tackle their challenges more effectively and efficiently. He stressed that the Presidency of the CCM could only kick start certain processes and render the necessary support in the initial phase with the expectation that these would eventually be self-sustaining.

Mr Frank Meeussen, on behalf of the European External Action Service division of the European Union (EU) gave an overview of the EU's long standing tradition of promoting an international system based on stronger multilateral cooperation and good global governance, in line with its guiding principles of human rights, international humanitarian law and International Law. He elaborated that competences on foreign and security policy remained at the level of the EU Member States, but the European External Action Service was mandated by the EU Treaty to define and implement a common European foreign and security policy, based on agreed common positions and the achievement of an ever-increasing degree of convergence of Member States' policies. When translated to the field of arms control, this meant that the EU was supporting multilateral arms control and disarmament conventions. This support was demonstrated by active EU participation at international Meetings of multilateral Conventions and through the financial support for outreach and implementation in third countries. He further reported that the EU was also a top donor in the field of humanitarian mine action, including the clearance of cluster munitions.

He pointed out that of the 28 EU Member States, 21 were States Parties to the CCM, 1 a signatory and 6 had not signed the Convention. Nonetheless, the EU fully supported the humanitarian goals of the CCM as could be seen by its unhesitant response to finance the South East Asia seminar.

Session 1: Challenges of Cluster Munition Remnants contamination in the region

The objective of this session was to offer all the representatives of the States present an opportunity to share their nation perception of the challenges regarding the issue of cluster munition contamination as well as other matters such as the risks and threats, entry into force and implementation of the CCM and the prospect of accession to the Convention.

The session was chaired by Ms. Megan Burke, Director of the ICBL-CMC (International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the Cluster Munition Coalition). Presentations were made by the representatives of Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand.



The State representatives shared their individual national perspectives and experiences on efforts employed to deal with the challenges posed by cluster munitions. Some pointed out that the contamination was from old conflicts from as far back as the Second World War and had continued to injure, maim and kill their nationals. Some of the main challenges related to limited technical expertise on the identification, destruction and clearance of cluster munitions. In some cases, even the transportation of cluster munitions stocks to destruction sites was a complex exercise.

Some of the major effects of cluster munitions that were highlighted included restriction of access to agricultural land, adverse impact on development and the large areas of contaminated areas due to the high number of sub-munitions delivered in a single strike.

Participants shared some of the methods employed to address these issues including through legal frameworks, integration of mine action in national strategic plans and other broader development plans. In some cases the national mine action strategy has been linked to the UN global Sustainable Development Goals – SDG 18 in particular.

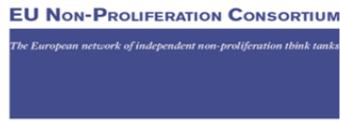
Most pointed out that while they were not States Parties, they were in full support of the humanitarian objectives of the CCM. As such they would continue to clear cluster munitions remnants from their respective territories.

Session 2: Introducing the country coalition concept

This session focused on cooperation and assistance by introducing the country coalition concept, discussing and refining this approach. The relevant actors for such a coalition would include representatives of the affected country, donor states, international organizations, operators on the ground and other relevant experts, such as the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD).

The session was chaired by Mr. Benjamin Hautecouverture, Senior Research Fellow at the Fondation pour la recherche stratégique (FRS) of the EU Non-Proliferation Consortium (France/EUNPC). The panellists were Ambassador Michael Biontino and Ms. Megan Burke.

Ambassador Biontino outlined that a country coalition should be specific to address an affected country's peculiar challenges. He emphasised the need for the coordination of donor support especially in the case of smaller donor states that would have a challenge keeping up with monitoring requirements. He highlighted that greater efficiency and approaches were necessary in order to maximize on the limited resources available. He underscored the importance of national ownership as the key to a successful country coalition which required that the objectives of the collaboration were clear with a national strategy document as the guiding document for the partnerships created. The other critical element was the funding channels employed which demanded better and greater collaboration and a clear understanding of how the coalition was going to be implemented in order for the objectives of the coalition to occur.



In her presentation, Ms Burke stated that all countries are in a position to contribute to country coalitions as a means to further the implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. She laid out the Cluster Munition Coalition's views on what successful country coalitions should include, provided some brief examples of strong country-specific partnerships, and encouraged participants to consider how their country could contribute to the concept.

Session 3: Cooperation and assistance - The connection between affected countries and donor countries – Best practices in coordination/cooperation

The session sought to address the issue of the connection between affected countries and donor countries. Chaired by Mr. Frank Meeussen, the panel comprised of Ms. Genevieve Clune, representative of Australia, Mr. Khampheng Douangthongla, representative of Lao PDR and Mr. Vidya Abhayagunawardena representative of the Sri Lanka Campaign to Ban Landmines. The panelists gave presentations from both donor and affected state perspectives and shared some practical examples of how this had been done in individual countries such as Lao PDR.

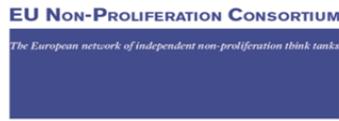
The exchanges acknowledged that any collaboration needed to prioritize local capacity building in order to be sustainable over the long term. It was also noted that it would be most useful when donors in a particular country worked in a coordinated manner so that there was no confusion regarding who was doing what, with whom and that there were no overlaps in the various interventions. It was also noted that donor states tended to dictate to affected states which areas to focus which may not be their priority. Affected states also cited complex procedures to access assistance. Competing national priorities in some instances resulted in affected States opting for more politically expedient focus areas.

From the perspective of donor states, it was noted that national coordination was paramount to successful collaboration as it exhibited transparency and avoided the duplication of actions. Another key element included the need for affected states to provide as much information as possible in a timely manner so as to facilitate a more effective collaboration.

The session concluded that long-term cooperative engagement incorporated into multi-tier national structures and local organizations should be prized and replicated to ensure successful coalitions.

Session 4: Practical implications 1 - Victim assistance

The objective of Session 4 was to explore the practical implications of the country coalition concept on the challenge of implementing CCM obligations on victim assistance under Article 5 of the Convention.



The session was chaired by Mr Aksel Steen-Nilsen, Norwegian People's Aid - Programme Director in Cambodia. The panelists were Mr. Juan Carlos Ruan, Director of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention- Implementation Support Unit (APMBC-ISU), Ms. Sheila Mweemba, Director of the Convention on Cluster Munitions Implementation Support Unit (CCM-ISU) and Mr. Benoit Couturier, representative of Handicap International in Lao PDR.

The session opened with a touching presentation by Thai landmine survivor and activist, Ms. Wiboonrat Chanchoo, leader of the Committee for Persons with Disabilities in Tambon Pan Suek in Aranyaprathet District, Sakaeo Province of Thailand. Ms. Wiboonrat has long worked with the ICBL and CMC; and locally, as the head of an organization for landmine survivors and people with disabilities. She shared her personal story of being a mine survivor and how her life had changed in an instant by the unfortunate event. She highlighted that the plight of victims continued long after the physical consequences of the accident as they face challenges to become socio-economically integrated in their communities. She reminded that even after 20 years of her activism the basic needs of survivors had remained the same; prostheses, financial support and micro-credit, accessibility and modification of accommodation and public facilities for appropriate use by persons with disabilities and the need to know about their rights. She emphasized the importance of government support and understanding of victims to ensure their full and equal participation in the society. She underscored the need to protect the rights of victims in an all-inclusive and sustainable manner. She concluded by calling on the international community to continue working together to ensure that no one would have to suffer from this indiscriminate weapon ever again.

The session provided participants with a background to the evolution on the understanding and implementation of victim assistance in humanitarian disarmament conventions and shared the lessons that have been learnt over the years. In regard to the country coalitions concept, it was noted that some of the key elements to a successful collaboration included strengthened partnerships at all levels (national, bilateral, multilateral, regional, international) and strong national ownership through the timely communication of challenges and seeking of assistance. Donor partners are encouraged to respond constructively to requests for assistance. Affected states should exchange good practices and make the most of existing tools of effective collaborations. All these interventions should employ the integrated approach to victim assistance and a guidance document was available showcasing best practices in this area shared by affected states.

Session 5: Practical implications 2 – Clearance

The objective of Session 5 was to explore the practical implications of the country coalition concept on the challenge of Article 4 (clearance of cluster munitions remnants and risk reduction education) obligations of the Convention.

The session was chaired by Mr. Maarten Broekhof of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and panelists were Mr. Touch Pheap of Cambodia and Mr. Bounpheng Sisawath of Lao PDR.



The two state representatives shared with the seminar participants specific efforts being undertaken by their respective national authorities to effectively deal with the challenges faced in clearance of cluster munition contamination. They highlighted the value that donor collaboration added to their endeavours and how good communication and strong national ownership of the interventions had been the keys to the success of their programs. They encouraged greater collaboration and transparency for these partnerships to achieve their common objectives.

Mr Broekhof wrapped up the session by sharing the initiative that Netherlands and Norway in their roles as the CCM Coordinators on Cluster Munitions Remnants clearance with technical support of the GICHD had undertaken in November 2016 with affected state party, Lebanon. The workshop had brought together representatives of the Lebanon Mine Action Centre and operators to discuss efficiency in clearance of cluster munitions. The technical workshop had focused on cluster munition survey and clearance and implementation of Article 4 of the CCM. The timing of the workshop perfectly coincided with the revision of Lebanon's National Mine Action Standards and that the outcomes of the workshop had directly fed into this process and already some of the recommendations had been implemented. The Netherlands added that the workshop allowed overcoming challenges previously identified in the country.

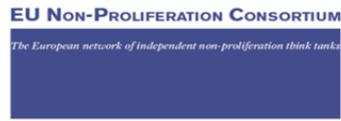
Wrap up and recommendations

The seminar was wrapped up with final thoughts provided by Ambassador Stefano Toscano, Director of the GICHD and Ms Sandra de Waele representative of the Delegation of the EU to Thailand.

It was concluded that the objective of the country coalitions concept was to foster comprehensive implementation of the CCM through external cooperation. Already there were a number of good examples of how a good country coalition would look like such as the efforts in Colombia, Afghanistan, Lao PDR and Lebanon.

In this regard, the basic steps of a successful coalition should include the following elements:-

- National ownership – affected country in the lead
- Reference document – set documents to guide the collaboration
- Transparency/communication
- Regular reporting on progress, donor accountability, functional information systems
- Good donor coordination – country level coordination and clear means of implementation
- Dedicated platform to bring all the elements together



The recommended next steps were outlined as:-

- Affected states to trigger country coalition initiatives for good national buy-in
- Set up a platform for this collaboration – even informal; agencies like the UNDP can help
- Launch a pilot country coalition as soon as possible to demonstrate a concrete example of the benefits of such an initiative

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