



Southeast Asia and Pacific Regional Workshop on the Convention on Cluster Munitions

Concept Note

Context

Over the last 80 years, cluster munitions have caused the deaths and injuries of thousands of civilians. Building on the Anti-Personnel Mines Ban Convention (APMBC), the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) represents a groundbreaking, legally binding international treaty aimed at eliminating the civilian harm caused by cluster munitions through the comprehensive prohibition of their use, production, stockpiling, and transfer.

However, the Convention currently faces increasing challenges, as the norms prohibiting the use of indiscriminate weapon systems are being eroded. The changing nature of warfare, with battles increasingly fought in densely populated urban areas, often pushes the rules of war—particularly the principles of distinction and proportionality—into the background, subordinating them to immediate military objectives.

Given these challenges, International Humanitarian Law (IHL) must remain a cornerstone for shaping the morality of conflict and regulating the use of military technologies. The indiscriminate use of weapons like cluster munitions not only results in long-term harm by leaving a legacy of violence, trauma, and permanent disabilities for countless civilians, but it also deeply fractures communities, making peace and reconciliation in post-war societies far more difficult to achieve. These enduring consequences highlight the urgent need to preserve and strengthen the protective norms established by humanitarian disarmament treaties like the CCM.

The importance of upholding and strengthening these established norms, as well as preserving the effectiveness of existing humanitarian disarmament treaties, is a shared responsibility for all states committed to safeguarding civilians in armed conflicts. Promoting and protecting these comprehensive prohibitions is not just a moral imperative but also an obligation. Article 21 of the CCM clearly outlines this duty, requiring States Parties to actively promote the treaty's norms and to make every effort to discourage non-party states from using cluster munitions.

Achieving universal adherence to these norms is critical to the success of the CCM. While regions like Europe, Africa, and the Americas have the highest rates of ratification and accession, progress remains limited in Asia, the Middle East, and the Pacific. Increasing adherence in these regions is essential for reaching the CCM's target of 130 States Parties by 2025. The responsibility to promote universalization falls on all States Parties, and their

collective action is crucial to ensuring that the CCM fulfills its mission of preventing further civilian harm and fostering global peace and security.

Purpose

The workshop aims to contribute in addressing the humanitarian, developmental, and security challenges posed by cluster munitions in the Asia-Pacific region through a regional action toward universalizing the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). Specifically, the workshop seeks to:

- 1. Strengthen Humanitarian Disarmament Norms and Address Regional Barriers:** Reinforce the importance of the CCM and other humanitarian disarmament treaties in protecting civilians, preventing future harm, and fostering sustainable peace and development in the Asia-Pacific region. Identify and discuss region-specific barriers to ratification or accession, including political, legislative, and institutional challenges, and explore tailored solutions to overcome these obstacles.
- 2. Draw Lessons from Other Regions and Promote Collaboration:** Facilitate the exchange of best practices and lessons learned from regions with higher CCM adherence rates, such as Europe and Africa, and reflect on these strategies to the unique geopolitical and cultural contexts of the Asia-Pacific. Foster regional and cross-sector collaboration among states, civil society organizations, affected communities, and other stakeholders to build momentum for universalizing the CCM in the region.
- 3. Enhance Technical Knowledge and Capacity:** Provide participants with the necessary resources, tools, and expert guidance on key CCM operational obligations, including stockpile destruction, land clearance, victim assistance, and national implementation measures.
- 4. Highlight Developmental Benefits:** Demonstrate how CCM adherence aligns with broader national and regional development priorities, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), by emphasizing its positive impacts on economic recovery, human security, and social cohesion.
- 5. Sustain Momentum, Raise Awareness:** Establish mechanisms for follow-up, monitoring, and evaluation of progress toward CCM universalization in the Asia-Pacific region, including regional networks, partnerships, and periodic progress reviews.

Building on initiatives such as the Bangkok seminar (2017) and the Manila workshop (2019), this interactive event seeks to catalyze regional action. It is hoped that by the 13th Meeting of States Parties to the CCM, more countries from Southeast Asia and the Pacific will have joined the Convention.

Target Participants

This workshop is designed to attract experts and policy-makers on mine action and national legal advisers from non-States Parties to the CCM in the Southeast Asian region and in the Pacific actively participating in the decision-making process or their governments' deliberations on accession to humanitarian disarmament conventions. The workshop will also include the participation of experts and relevant organizations that will contribute to and enrich the discussions.

Representatives from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Philippines to the UN in Geneva and the Philippines' Department of Foreign Affairs will also be part of the Workshop.

