

Informal meeting on Enhancing International Cooperation and Assistance under the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM)

0815 - 1000, Wednesday 20 December, Room M6, United Nations Office in Vienna

MEETING SUMMARY

On Wednesday 20 December 2017, Australia and Peru, CCM Coordinators on International Cooperation and Assistance, hosted an informal meeting in the margins of the 2017 Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention Meeting of States Parties.

Approximately 15 representatives from donor states and three representatives in their capacity as CCM Coordinators participated in the meeting. Donor states were encouraged to share with each other their experiences in providing cooperation and assistance under the CCM.

1. KEY POINTS RAISED

- In decision-making and reporting on assistance, donors tended to focus more on the socio-economic benefit of mine action than on the specific munition being cleared.
- Affected countries should highlight potential development benefits of assistance being sought.
- Donors faced internal challenges coordinating, and breaking down silos between ministries, as well as highlighting the broader development benefits of mine action.
- Donors faced ongoing coordination challenges both at the international level and on the ground, with other donors and local authorities.
- It was important for donors to identify the right local authorities to partner with when providing assistance.
- Multi-year funding arrangements were not possible for some countries, but could be replicated through consistent funding to particular projects.
- There were a number of countries with impending deadlines under the Convention, which had small obstacles to overcome to achieve completion of their obligations and which could be targeted for assistance.
- Work was ongoing on the possible establishment of two Country Coalitions.
- A database could be a useful mechanism for sharing information on needs, capacities for assistance and experience in meeting challenges, and could also help track assistance provided and progress on deadlines.
- Affected countries had an important role to play in sharing experiences of meeting completion challenges.

2. DETAILED RECORD OF THE MEETING

2.1 Introductory Remarks:

- Australia and Peru, CCM Coordinators on International Cooperation and Assistance (ICA), opened the meeting by explaining the key objectives of the meeting:
 - To create an additional channel through which unmet challenges and needs could be raised.
 - To help donor states understand the difficulties affected countries face

- To provide the foundations for the establishment of enhanced partnerships under the Convention, such as Country Coalitions as proposed by the German Presidency
- To allow donor states to provide guidance to the Coordinators on ICA on how best to take forward their work
- Australia and Peru noted that the Co-Coordiators had held two informal meetings over the last year. At both meetings, affected and donor states participated. Following comments from those sessions, three meetings would be held in 2017-18: one with donor states, one with affected states and one with donor and affected states together. This meeting, with donor states only, was the second of the new three meeting cycle.
- The Coordinators explained that previous meetings had concluded that:
 - Lack of funding, technical expertise and resources were major obstacles to meeting obligations;
 - Lack of national ownership and political will to implement obligations were also key barriers to meeting obligations;
 - Donors/partners could assist with building capacity of national mine action authorities and local NGOs;
 - Donors/partners required the provision as much detail as possible on the status of implementation of convention obligations, specific hurdles to meeting deadlines and what assistance was required;
 - Key channels of communications included: direct bilateral contact, meetings on the margins of multilateral meetings, NGOs and Article 7 reports;
 - There was a need for better coordination amongst donors to ensure all states in need of assistance receive support;
 - It would be useful for the Coordinators meeting separately with States in need of assistance and donor/partner States before holding joint meetings.
 - There was broad support for the Country Coalition approach.
- The Coordinators noted that they thought the informal ICA meetings last year were effective because they led to the establishment of at least one new partnership.
- The Coordinators outlined how, on 24 November 2017, they held the first meeting of the new cycle. At this meeting, only affected states attended. In light of that meeting, the Coordinators hoped that this meeting would:
 - Provide donors and partner countries the opportunity to share priorities over the provision of assistance
 - Provide donor and partner countries the opportunity to respond to the key issues raised by affected states
 - Provide a baseline for the establishment of partnerships between affected and partner states
 - Further strengthen the Country Coalition approach

2.2 Overview of Current status of Cooperation and Assistance Needs

- Sheila Mweemba, Director of the CCM Implementation Support Unit (ISU), provided the following update on the overall status of reporting:
 - 82% of Article VII reports for 2016 had been received so far. The ISU was still awaiting the receipt of 18 reports.

- There had been an increase in the number of states requesting assistance. In 2015, 10 states requested assistance. In 2016, 13 states requested assistance.
- There had been an increase in the number of states providing assistance. In 2015, 14 states provided assistance. In 2016, 19 states provided assistance.
- There had also been an increase in the number of states who received assistance. In 2015, four states received assistance. In 2016, 10 states received assistance.
- Under Article III on Stockpile Destruction:
 - 10 states had obligations of which not every state has requested assistance.
 - Two states had deadlines in 2018. Neither required assistance and the ISU believed both were on track.
 - Three states had deadlines in 2019. One had requested and received assistance and one had stated they would meet their deadline without assistance. The position of the final state was unclear.
- Under Article IV on Clearance:
 - 10 States Parties had obligations of which eight had requested assistance.
 - The requests from these parties varied. Some had asked for general clearance assistance, others had asked for specific funding and others had asked for training and survey assistance.
 - 18 states had reported providing assistance on clearance.
- Under Article V on Victim Assistance:
 - 11 States Parties had obligations of which eight had requested assistance
 - 14 States Parties had provided assistance under the Convention.
- Under Article IX on National Implementation:
 - Only one State Party had requested assistance. This request was for the development of specific CCM implementation legislation.

2.3 Briefing on Meeting with Affected Countries and Others with Pressing Obligations under the CCM held in Geneva on 24 November

- The Coordinators advised that the key outcomes and recommendations from their meeting with affected States on 24 November were that:
 - One affected State, Montenegro, had made a specific request for financial and technical assistance to complete clearance and technical assistance to complete a National Action Plan on Victim Assistance
 - Countries requiring assistance should be more assertive in their requests.
 - Countries requiring assistance should be more active in pursuing regional cooperation.
 - Countries requiring assistance should produce detailed completion plans and requests for assistance.
 - Countries requiring assistance should actively sensitize donor countries to their needs.
 - The ISU or Coordinators should establish a database for exchanging information on donor/partner priorities and capacities to assist, but also the sharing of needs and experience between countries.
 - Donor countries should coordinate closely with national mine action authorities to understand their real needs and priorities and should not apply a 'cookie-cutter approach' to assistance.

- Donor countries should consider long-term, multi-year partnerships to provide predictability in affected states.
- Country coalitions should be pursued as a way to ensure effective national ownership.
- Article VII reports provide the fundamental channel for communication between States Parties.

2.4 Exchange of Views on Current Priorities and Challenges relating to the Provision of Cooperation and Assistance

- A donor state said:
 - There was a basic tension between the Convention's focus on the item (i.e. the clearance of cluster munitions) and donors' focus on broader impacts (i.e. the socio-economic benefit provided by clearance in general). This posed a significant challenge for donor states as they tended not to distinguish between landmines and cluster munitions in decision-making and reporting on assistance.
 - There were three pillars in its assistance strategy:
 - Ensure that other State Parties meet their obligations under the Conventions
 - Pursue sustainable development
 - Empower local authorities and capacity build on a local level
 - It faced a number of challenges in the provision of assistance. This included weak inter-agency coordination. It struggled to coordinate between government agencies who often had often had diverging interests.
 - International donor coordination remained an issue. Existing mechanisms for donor coordination such as the Mine Action Support Group were not operating as effectively as they could be.
 - It would be helpful to know which countries had small obstacles to overcome to achieve completion of their obligations - these countries should be targeted first for assistance.

- The ISU provided detailed information on states with impending deadlines under the Convention.

- A donor state said:
 - Generally, it did not have any problems obtaining information about assistance requests. There were already several mechanisms through which States Parties can get in touch (eg. the ISU, bilateral meetings, national development assistance offices abroad etc.).
 - The real issue was how to prioritise these requests – it received more requests than it could respond to.
 - The criteria it used to prioritize requests included:
 - Ensuring compliance with treaties – it prioritised states which had more pressing obligations under Conventions
 - Membership of treaties – it used assistance to encourage universalisation

- Wider political considerations (eg. historical ties, with a view to ensuring continuity to its presence)
 - It was important to find the right partner in the country. In the absence of local capacities, the presence in the country of international organizations is key to implement mine action projects.
 - Coordination was an important element, particularly at the local level, between donors, and with local authorities.
 - It acknowledged multi-year funding was important but financial regulations prevented it from implementing these arrangements. Instead, it tried to maintain funding in the same country for a certain period of time.
 - It was important to break down silos and promote mine action as a cross-sectoral activity that impacted and empowered other development work and should thus receive greater funding.
 - It welcomed with interest an affected country's request for technical assistance in completing its National Action Plan on Victim Assistance.
- A donor state said:
 - It was involved in mine action programmes in in 20 countries. Many of these programmes focused on cluster munitions.
 - It provided assistance through three main organizations: the HALO Trust, MAG and NPA.
 - It was focused on clearance and only provided small amounts of funding for victim assistance.
 - It was considering the possibility of a Country Coalition with an affected country. This was subject to funding being approved for an operator. The problem in the affected country was small and it would be a good pilot for the Country Coalition concept. The donor state encouraged other states to join that coalition.
 - It would host a seminar on clearance in January in support of another Country Coalition with another affected country and the creation of a regular donors forum. It would be helpful to have the attendance of donor countries at this seminar to promote further provision of assistance.
- A donor state said:
 - It provided the bulk of its mine action funding through the EU.
 - It faced challenges providing funding to mine action as government agencies considered mine action to be a defence matter.
 - Returning cleared land to productive use was important and further international cooperation in support of this was needed.
- A donor state said:
 - It shared the challenges mentioned previously regarding the tension between the Convention's focus on the object (i.e cluster munitions) and donors' focus on socio-economic impact.
 - The Coordinators could provide guidance to affected states on donor countries' priorities, including on the need to highlight the development benefits of requested assistance in their applications.

- A donor state said:
 - It supported the idea of a database as a platform through which to share information.

- The ISU said:
 - Ensuring timely reporting and updating of information would be a key challenge in ensuring the success of any database
 - Article VII reporting provided an important illustration of this - many states had missed the deadline for their 2016 reports and would now be unlikely to provide them – it was already time for them to submit their 2017 reports.
 - States had provided a number of reasons for their failure to provide reports, including:
 - Changeover in staff
 - Shortage in staff
 - The number of reports requiring submission
 - Simultaneous reporting deadlines
 - 15 states still had outstanding initial transparency reports. Unless these states submitted their reports, the ISU would have no idea of these state of progress on implementation of these countries' obligations.

- A donor state said:
 - It encouraged the creation of a database noting it would make it easier to assess needs and prioritise funding.
 - The database could also keep track of progress over time and provide reminders to state parties to submit extension requests.

- A donor state asked how the Coordinators planned to operationalise the recommendations of the meeting.

- The Coordinators said the key points raised would be shared with both participating donors and affected countries for discussion at a further meeting of donor and affected countries, likely to be held in the margins of the Ottawa Convention intersessional meeting.

- A donor state said:
 - It supported the Country Coalitions concept as a mechanism to create meaningful change.
 - The ISU's attendance at the Ottawa Convention meeting was welcome and it encouraged further harmonisation of work under the two Conventions.
 - It was important that affected countries who were effective in addressing their completion challenges act as "Ambassadors", sharing experience on how this could be done.