

**Comments on Lebanon's Article 4 Extension Request
Delivered by Norwegian People's Aid, on behalf of Mine Action Review
Second Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (part 1)
25–27 November 2020**

Thank you, Mr, President.

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the Mine Action Review project.

In recent years and since the First Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Dubrovnik in 2015, the Lebanon Mine Action Centre (LMAC) has made some welcome and substantive improvements to its Mine Action Programme.

These include:

- Creation of the **Mine Action Forum**, with the support of Norway, which has proved to be an effective platform that gathers donors and implementing agencies together to transparently discuss achievements and challenges.
- Establishment of a **Technical Working Group** between LMAC and implementing partners, that meets quarterly to discuss operational issues.
- Increased application and reliance on **non-technical survey**, with the goal of completing re-survey of all cluster munition contaminated areas by the end of 2020.
- The **piloting and adoption of technical survey for cluster munition remnants**, which had not been permitted previously.
- And the **fixing of the original starting baseline of cluster munition remnant contamination** at 54.78km², so that progress in land release going forward can be clearly and accurately reflected and deducted from the baseline.

In addition, since submitting the Extension Request in February, a National Mine Action Strategy has been signed and a strategic implementation plan for 2020–25 elaborated, further positive developments.

These collective measures will undoubtedly help LMAC to implement its Article 4 obligations more efficiently, effectively, and swiftly.

However, in order to achieve completion by the 1 May 2026 deadline requested, LMAC will need to ensure greater application of evidence based technical survey. And also that 100% clearance only commences from confirmed evidence points, as it has stated in the Extension Request, but which has not always been the case in the past.

Fulfilment of LMAC's planned land release outputs is contingent on the assumption that the Government of Lebanon delivers on pledged national funding towards clearance for the first three years of the extension. We hope that despite the challenges it faces, including political, economic, and due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, the Lebanese government is still able to commit to the national funding which will allow an increase in clearance capacity.

We appreciate that as Lebanon moves into the final phase on its path to completion, the geographical and topographical features of many of the remaining cluster munition contaminated areas cause them to be more operationally challenging.

Mine Action Review commends Lebanon on its transparency regarding addressing cluster munition contaminated areas on the most "difficult terrain", typically in deep and very steep canyons and

cliffs. We look forward to learning more about the number and extent of these tasks and how LMAC plans to address them, following its joint study planned. Mine Action Review stands ready to provide support and join discussions on the topic as and when required, to help Lebanon ensure it meets its Article 4 obligations fully. Such discussions may help guide other countries facing cluster munition contamination of a similar nature.

We welcome LMAC's reference to the envisaged environmental benefits of cluster munition clearance in its request, including the launching of sustainable forest management initiatives and protection from several hazards including forest fires.

Lastly, we encourage Lebanon to provide the international community with:

- Regular updates to its Article 4 planning, based on actual annual output achieved.
- Information on what steps it plans to further mainstream gender and diversity within its mine action programme.
- Details of plans for addressing the discovery of previously unknown cluster munition contamination following completion (i.e. residual contamination).

Thank you.