



Kingdom of the Netherlands

**Statement on behalf of
the Analysis Group for Article 4 Extension Requests
(Afghanistan, Montenegro, Sweden and the Netherlands)
at
Second Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions,
agenda item 8, organization of work**

20 September 2021

Afghanistan

Mr President,

Thank you for giving me the floor, I have the honour to present on behalf of the Analysis Group for Article 4 extension requests the report on the extension request by Afghanistan. The report is contained in document CCM/CONF/2021/3. Due to the late submission of the report, currently only an advanced copy is available of this document.

Option 1

[In the absence of a presentation by the requesting state party, allow me to briefly touch upon some of the elements in the request that was submitted in writing.

When the CCM entered into force for Afghanistan, in March 2012, 21 cluster munition (CM) hazards covering 7.6 km² were recorded. Since then, an additional 26 CM hazards that cover 15.3 km² have been discovered. Clearance programmes since entry into force have released 30 CM hazards, with 12.4 km² cleared and 0.25 km² cancelled. A total of 5,454 cluster munition remnants have been destroyed.

The request specifies that prior to April 2021 (when Afghanistan submitted its latest Article 7 transparency report), there were only 10 CM hazards that remained to be cleared, 5 of which – covering a total area of 3.58 km²– are currently being addressed, with clearance expected to be completed by the end of 2021. Clearance operations for the other 5 CM hazards have been delayed due to a delay in donor funding. Additionally, 11 CM hazards have been identified and surveyed since April 2021. Out of these 11 recently discovered contaminated sites, 7 were not previously identified due to access issues.

Therefore, there remain 16 CM hazards with a total area of 9.9 km² to be addressed during the requested extension period. The request states that there is a possibility of an additional 3 km² of cluster munition contaminated area in Paktya province, but this area cannot currently be surveyed due to the security situation. Afghanistan's Directorate of Mine Action Coordination (DMAC) estimates this to be the last area suspected to contain cluster munition remnant contamination. Nevertheless, in its request Afghanistan assures that any previously unknown cluster munition contamination discovered during ongoing non-technical survey in the country will be reported.

The request informs that Afghanistan is requesting a 4-year extension of its Article 4 deadline due to its volatile security situation, persistent funding shortfall since 2012, and the harsh winter conditions that limit clearance operations in most of the cluster munition contaminated areas. It further indicates that with an average productivity rate of 60,000 m² per demining team (DT) per month, 165 DTs will be required. Furthermore, at least one Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) team will be working alongside the DTs throughout the extension period.]

Option 2

[Allow me to also thank the distinguished representative of Afghanistan for presenting the extension request here today. As we are all aware, at the current stage much remains unclear about the situation and the future of mine action in Afghanistan. Since it is the mandate of the Analysis Group to base its work upon the information received in the request and subsequent submissions for clarification by the State Party, the report submitted by the Group is based on that information.]

Mr President,

Afghanistan signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) on 3 December 2008, ratified it on 8 September 2011, and the Convention entered into force for it on 1 March 2012. In Afghanistan's initial transparency report, submitted on 30 August 2012, it reported to have a total of 7.6 km² of cluster munition contaminated area. In its extension request, submitted on 3 August 2021, Afghanistan reported that, since entry into force, an additional 15.3 km² of contamination had been discovered.

Following the submission of the extension request by Afghanistan, the Analysis Group requested additional information to facilitate further consideration of the request. On 10 August 2021, Afghanistan submitted a revised extension request and a detailed response to the questions posed by the Analysis Group. The Analysis Group met on 11 August 2021 to consider the revised extension request and the supplementary information provided by Afghanistan. All these submissions are available on the website of the convention.

In its report, the Analysis Group noted with disappointment the need for the submission of an extension request by Afghanistan, as it had previously consistently reported to being on track to fulfil its obligation under Article 4 of the Convention by its initial deadline of 1 March 2022. However, the Group also commends Afghanistan for its prompt notification of the need to request a deadline extension when previously unknown cluster munition contaminated areas were discovered.

The Analysis Group commends Afghanistan for its high-quality extension request and detailed response to the questions posed by the Group. The Group notes that the work plan presented by Afghanistan is feasible and can be easily monitored by the States Parties.

The Analysis Group notes with appreciation that Afghanistan has provided information to demonstrate that methodologies utilized are in compliance with international standards including the latest International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). The Group further acknowledges that Afghanistan has continued to support cluster munition victims in accordance with Article 5 of the Convention, to provide Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) to affected population groups and to mark areas contaminated with cluster munitions to prevent further casualties.

The Analysis Group acknowledges that while achieving equal participation remains a momentous challenge in Afghanistan's national mine action programme, Afghanistan demonstrates a tangible commitment to build on its experience of mainstreaming gender and diversity in all its mine action pillars.

In recommending to grant the four-year extension to Afghanistan, the Analysis Group notes that the Convention would benefit from Afghanistan reporting annually through its Article 7 reports and at Meetings of States Parties or Review Conferences on the following:

- a) Progress made on the implementation of the work plan provided in its extension request;
- b) Updated information on the remaining contamination after further surveys or resurveys have been conducted and an updated work plan based on the new information gathered;
- c) Updated information related to previously inaccessible cluster munition contaminated areas or surveyed areas controlled by Anti-Government Elements (AGEs) once these areas become accessible;
- d) Updated information on its funding situation including finances received from its main donor and whether further resource mobilization would be necessary for any aspect of its cluster munition clearance operations;
- e) Other relevant information.

In addition, allow me to highlight the importance of Afghanistan reporting to the States Parties as noted above, of keeping the States Parties regularly apprised of other pertinent developments as necessary.

Thank you Mr President.