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United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action
Convention on Cluster Munitions 10th Meeting of the States Parties
Statement under agenda item 8 – General Exchange of Views

Geneva, 30 August 2022

Delivered by Mr. Bruno Donat, Chief, Geneva office, UNMAS

Mr. President,¹

As this is the first time that I am taking the floor, please allow me to congratulate you and the United Kingdom on assuming the Presidency of the Tenth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. You can count on the full support and cooperation of the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action (IACG-MA)², on behalf of which I am delivering this statement.

Mr. President, Excellencies,

The United Nations Global Advocate for the Elimination of Mines and Explosive Hazards, Mr. Daniel Craig, just explained it very well earlier. The use of cluster munitions has severe humanitarian impact, especially in populated areas, and constitutes a grave breach of this convention. Targeting civilians and civilian structures is a violation of international humanitarian law.

The United Nations is extremely concerned about credible allegations of cluster munitions being used in Ukraine. Universal adherence to the Convention on Cluster Munitions is now more important than ever to ensure that no lives are lost to these indiscriminate weapons.

Mr. President,

Ending the use of Cluster Munitions is only one obligation of this treaty. States Parties also committed to engage in Clearance, Stockpile Destruction, Risk Education and Victim Assistance.

¹ Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Conference on Disarmament, Aidan Liddle.

² The United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action consists of twelve United Nations Departments and Offices of the Secretariat, specialized agencies, funds and programmes: the United Nations Mine Action Service of the Department of Peace Operations, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and the World Bank are observers.



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Please allow me to give you some concrete examples of the United Nations support and partnership in these efforts.

In Afghanistan, UNMAS implementing partners are undertaking clearance activities in the Eastern and Southeastern regions. Such activities are expected to be completed by November 2022. In addition, in 2022, UNMAS commenced a two-year nationwide village-by-village survey to clarify the extent of cluster munition contamination in the country. However, further funding for survey and clearance of Southern areas, inaccessible before August 2021, is urgently needed to make sure Afghanistan can meet its clearance deadline of 2026.

The United Nations identifies similar needs for funding in Lao PDR. While, despite significant constraints due to the pandemic, mine action operators have cleared more land and destroyed more ordnance in 2021 than in any other year prior, the future of funding for clearance in Lao PDR remains unclear.

The United Nations calls for long-term commitment of donors to supporting the country in meeting its clearance obligations.

Excellencies,

Risk education is crucial in helping civilians avoid risks and in supporting survey and clearance through community reporting of submunitions. Children, in particular, are disproportionately affected by explosive ordnance, and should be targeted by tailored risk education messages.

In Iraq, at least 125 children were killed in 2021 due to EO-related accidents, and in Afghanistan, the United Nations documented nearly two children killed or injured each day between August 2021 and May 2022. Relying on radio message broadcasting and integrating risk education messages with polio vaccination campaigns in Afghanistan, between January and June 2022, UNICEF and partners reached more than 190,000 children, of whom, 48% were girls.

In Lebanon, United Nations EORE efforts, in collaboration with the Lebanon Mine Action Centre and partners, aim at enhancing knowledge and changing the behaviours of children and community members so they can recognize and report identified threats to local authorities. From January 2020 to August 2022, UNICEF reached more than 51,000 children and some 1,700 professionals with EORE, including on cluster munitions, in the country.



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The United Nations encourages States Parties to intensify efforts to integrate EORE messages within broader campaigns with high outreach, such as vaccination and back-to-school campaigns, and into educational curricula. In particular in situations where security deteriorates, Community-Based Explosive Ordnance Risk Education can be another means of delivering the message, as implemented for instance by UNMAS in Darfur.

Excellencies,

Prevention is better than treatment. But where Risk Education did not prevent, Victim Assistance becomes an indispensable priority to alleviate human suffering.

In 2021, UNICEF provided victim assistance to more than 1,600 survivors and, together with partners, reached some 400 children in Afghanistan.

Mr. President,

Meeting the need remains a major challenge: in many countries, victim assistance is often not prioritized for funding and there is a lack of data on victims to analyze the situation and identify appropriate interventions. In Afghanistan, children face increased dangers as they try to support their families by participating in scrap metal collection in newly accessible areas. In Lebanon, the humanitarian situation is worsening, and the number of victims is increasing. Economic desperation is driving residents to unsafe practices and an absence of employees in the ministries of health, education, social affairs and labor, slows the process of reacting to and helping victims.

Excellencies,

The United Nations calls on States Parties to integrate victim assistance into government mine action plans to help raise the profile and priority of victim assistance interventions.

Mr. President,

The United Nations calls on all States to accede to the Convention on Cluster Munitions and particularly urges those states that have signed to reaffirm their determination to end the suffering caused by cluster munitions through ratification without further delay.

Thank you.

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