



Federal Republic of Germany  
Foreign Office

**10<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF STATES PARTIES OF THE CONVENTION ON CLUSTER  
MUNITIONS**

Geneva, 30.08. – 02.09.2022

**Statement on Art. 4 Compliance**

Mr. President,

Thank you for giving me the floor.

Contamination by cluster munition remnants in Germany is limited to one area: a former military training site of the soviet armed forces, located close to the town of Wittstock, circa 80 kilometres northwest of Berlin. In 2011, first indications for a cluster munition contamination were discovered and immediately reported, in accordance with article 7. In 2019, Germany was granted a deadline extension for its clearance obligations until August 2025.

Through the continuous use by forces of the former Warsaw Pact from 1953 to 1993, as a military training site, both for ground operations and air to ground targeting practices, including as a bombing range, the overall contamination of the 120 square kilometer site with unexploded ordnance and

remnants of war is very high. The suspected area of specifically cluster munition contamination is 11 square kilometers.

The area at Wittstock is heavily contaminated not only with cluster munition, but with all sorts of unexploded ordnance. Actually, only between 1 and 4 % of unexploded ordnance finds on the cluster Munition contaminated site actually consists in cluster munition remnants. The rest consists of other unexploded ordnance as well as shell splinters, smaller parts of ammunition and scrap metals. This material considerably slows down the clearance of the area.

The possibilities for mechanical clearance are very limited, since such clearance is not permissible under German law once large calibre munitions are present.

Considerable precautions need to be taken because of an enhanced fire hazard, owing to serious drought in the region.

In order to prevent forest fires and to ensure forest fire fighting, several preparatory steps have to be taken before any clearance operation: Access roads need to be prepared and cleared; Fire strips need to be established. A firebreak system surrounding the site that is 50 m wide and 90 km long has been established.

Due to the vegetation on the site, there is the need for controlled burning in order to proceed with sub-surface clearance operation. However, such burning can only be conducted within very limited time frames, owing to drought, as well as weather conditions, and outside of the bird breeding season. Favourable conditions for controlled burning are therefore usually only found on 1 or 2 days per year!

Using this method, as of June this year, around 5.12 square kilometres have been cleared and a total of 5,868 cluster sub-munitions have been detected, recovered and destroyed.

With a firm commitment to our clearance obligations and in order to fulfil its clearance deadline in August 2025, Germany has established a work plan for the years to come:

Three specialized private companies, with around 220 to 240 personnel, are currently working on clearing the site. This number was considerably increased in recent years. As a consequence, around 15% of all licensed personnel of the unexploded clearance industry in Germany do now work at Wittstock.

Until the end of 2021, around 57 Million EUR have been spent for clearance at Wittstock. We estimate that by completion of the clearance, an additional 100 Mio. EUR will have been spent, bringing the total clearance cost to approximately 157 Mio. EUR.

In the course of 2022 for instance, Germany is planning to clear around 1.5 square kilometres.

However, there are various risk factors that influence clearing speed that lie partially outside the control of Germany's planning:

- Firstly, the high density of contamination with metal objects and other unexploded ordnance decreases the speed of cluster munition clearance at Wittstock.
- Secondly: Due to the necessary safety and security precautions, Germany considers capacity limits have been reached with the current number of clearance personnel. Taking into account the peripheral location of the site, Covid-19-related staff absences, and a lack of trained personnel, it is challenging to fill all staff positions at Wittstock. The high temperatures (up to 40

degrees Centigrade in the shade, with work occurring in the sun), require frequent scheduled breaks.

- Thirdly, increasing clearing restrictions due to the ongoing drought, require additional clearing work related to fire protection, especially around blasting areas.
- Finally, delivery times of up to 6 months for new equipment and replacement materials, result in equipment downtime.

Germany monitors these factors and risks closely. Work plans are adapted and optimized regularly.

Furthermore, Germany seeks exchange on possibilities to increase the efficiency of cluster munition survey and clearance applicable to the specific circumstances prevailing at the Wittstock site.

We will continue to make every effort to fulfil our clearance obligations by 2025.

Thank you, Mr. President.