



Convention on Cluster Munitions 10th Meeting of States Parties

August 2022

Statement by The HALO Trust International Cooperation and Assistance

Check Against Delivery

Thank you Ambassador,

I would first like to thank the Presidency – here, and in London – for the way you have engaged HALO and others during the last year. I would also like to thank all of our donors and partners for their support to HALO. On international cooperation and assistance, we would like to offer our reflections and input on five areas.

First, our response to the conflict in **Ukraine**. As many of you know, HALO has worked in Ukraine since 2016. Until six months ago, the backbone of the programme was a team of 430 of my Ukrainian colleagues working in the east of the country. They responded immediately when war broke out, delivering emergency supplies to bomb shelters and distributing risk education messages. They worked with the HALO communications team to develop a digital risk education campaign that has reached 17.5 million people across Ukraine.

HALO's Ukraine team has since refocused the entire programme to respond to the current conflict. Our survey, clearance and risk education work aims is to protect civilians, support the emergency services in survey and clearance, and enable the humanitarian community to conduct its work safely.

HALO is committed to the people of Ukraine, and this is only possible due to the generous support of our donors, both public and private, and including the Presidency and many delegations in the room. And of course, its foundation is the dedication and commitment of my Ukrainian colleagues.

Second, **Afghanistan**. We would like to thank the donors who have continued to support HALO in Afghanistan. We are especially grateful to the German Federal Foreign Office, whose support has enabled an additional 300 deminers to join HALO Afghanistan. HALO is now proud to be an employer of almost 3,000 national staff in Afghanistan, offering meaningful and dignified work across the country, including to former combatants.

We are all aware of the diplomatic issues that states are facing. But the reality on the ground is this – HALO's demining operations are proceeding very well. HALO is now able to operate in areas where it hasn't previously been able to work due to conflict. We are clearing more landmines – including those of an improvised nature – other IEDs, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war than ever before. Which means we are assisting more communities than ever before. Meanwhile, our teams are also responding to

humanitarian emergencies, including the recent earthquakes and flash flooding, in some of Afghanistan's remotest regions.

Distinguished delegates,

24.5 million people in Afghanistan are dependent on humanitarian assistance, and the country has the highest explosive hazard casualty rate in the world. Our reassurance to you is that HALO's operations are achieving immediate and long-lasting impact, as well as supporting local economies and stabilisation. Our plea to you all is that you continue to support HALO's vital work in Afghanistan at a time when it is needed more than ever.

Third, **Gender and Diversity**. HALO has been a strong proponent of the full implementation of the gender commitments made by States Parties in the Lausanne Action Plan, as well as the Oslo Action Plan. HALO also fully supports the efforts of the Gender and Diversity Working Group here in Geneva, which continues to advance gender and diversity mainstreaming in mine action.

We are proud to update delegates that the number of women in HALO employment has grown significantly, as has the number of women in operational leadership. We are committed to ensuring this trend continues, as well as being committed to full, meaningful and equal participation of women in policy and decision-making.

We thank those delegations who have spoken in support of the commitments made by States Parties in both gender and diversity at the Second Review Conference. At a time when the rules based order is being challenged more than ever, we cannot pick and choose which commitments are kept or delivered, and which are not. And that applies to the gender, diversity, equity and inclusion commitments made in the Lausanne Action Plan.

Fourth, **Environment**. Conflict and disarmament do not take place in isolation from wider global issues and challenges, and neither does mine action. The impact of the planetary emergency is already being felt in extreme weather and natural hazard events, food and water insecurity and displacement. The environment crisis exacerbates fragility and conflict, just as conflict and fragility leads to environmental harm.

HALO is committed to understanding and reducing its environmental footprint. But we are also working proactively to ensure that our programmatic presence can achieve a positive environmental impact. We are undertaking ten initiatives in our programmes, including with local environmental organisations and communities. These projects aim to enhance environmental and agricultural sustainability, and offer alternatives to activities that have a detrimental effect on climate change and biodiversity.

And finally, **Innovative Finance**. As we stated at the Intersessional Meeting, we are grateful for the role the UK has played in driving forward innovative finance within the mine action community. As many of you will know, exploring all forms of innovative finance has been a top policy priority for HALO, and it is an explicit part of our organisational strategy.

The need for new modes of funding is plain to see. Despite the generosity of many states and organisations, our sector remains woefully under-funded. Funding has been broadly static for a decade. Which means it is declining against inflation. Meanwhile, the last decade has seen a huge increase in need for our sector's work in response to conflict in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Nagorno Karabakh, Afghanistan and now also Ukraine.

The work by the Presidency has shown that there is potential for many and varied forms of finance. There are significant opportunities offered by front-loading mechanisms and forms of blended finance that involve states, development finance institutions and capital markets. These mechanisms could support entire states or areas to become mine and cluster munition free through novel structures that enhance national ownership, impact and inclusion.

HALO is working with experts in the financial sector to develop large-scale innovative finance models to support countries nearing completion but struggling to secure sufficient funding. We are also exploring a model to provide long-term, stable funding to current conflicts, in anticipation of the inevitable funding drop after the first few years.

Our ambition for innovative finance must be bigger. Based on HALO's work to date, we are convinced that innovative finance can change the landscape of funding for this sector by adding to, not taking away from, the current funding streams and mechanisms. HALO looks forward to working with any delegation in the room who wishes to explore this further or learn more about HALO's work in this area.

As we have said before, Innovative Finance is about raising the funds required to meet need, and filling the multi-billion dollar shortfall faced by this community. But it is also about driving greater integration of our work with wider economies and economic development that is both sustainable and equitable, while enabling and supporting greater national ownership. Most of all, it is about achieving greater impact for people affected by conflict.

I thank you.

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