

CMC Statement on Clearance and Risk Education

*Convention on Cluster Munitions 12th Meeting of States Parties,
Geneva, 10-13 September 2024*

Thank you, Madame President,

We want to start by thanking all states who are sharing updates on their clearance progress and risk education efforts today and this week. We would also like to take the opportunity to thank the Coordinators, the Implementation Support Unit, and the Analysis Group for their ongoing excellent efforts to ensure timely implementation of Article 4.

Indeed, 2023, saw positive progress on implementation of Article 4 of the convention. Most notably Bosnia and Herzegovina achieved completion in August last year, becoming the eleventh State Party to fulfill its clearance obligation and become free of cluster munition remnants. As of the end of 2023, five States Parties had a clear understanding of their contamination, while survey was still ongoing in Lao PDR and Mauritania.

Further, the Cluster Munition Monitor reports that last year nine States Parties released a combined total of 92 km² of land contaminated by cluster munitions, out of which some 84 km² were cleared. As in the previous year, Lao PDR cleared the largest contaminated area (of over 62 km²).

Risk education was conducted in all States Parties to the convention during 2023, except of Chile and Germany, where contaminated areas are not accessible to the public.

The Cluster Munition Monitor found increasing evidence of risk education being tailored to high-risk behaviors and activities. In most States Parties, boys remained a key target group and children represented the largest number of beneficiaries (66%) of risk education programs. There was also progress in the development of approaches and messages sensitive to context and gender, age, disability, and diversity, based on data and reporting, in line with Action # 29 of the Lausanne Action Plan.

In 2023, risk education was also delivered in signatory states - Angola and the DRC, as well as in many non-signatories, including in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Libya, Serbia, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Yemen, often in the context of ongoing conflict and insecurity.

However, despite the progress, many challenges persist. Clearance of cluster munition remnants, and risk education for impacted communities, must remain a priority for all States Parties, and must be addressed with urgency.

The Cluster Munition Monitor reported a welcome reduction in the number of cluster munition remnants casualties recorded for 2023 compared to previous year. However, the 2023 casualty figures highlight the continuing humanitarian impact of cluster munition remnants, with civilians, especially children, particularly vulnerable. Civilians account for 93% of all the 2023 casualties, and children for almost half of known casualties from cluster munitions remnants.

A total of ten States Parties remains contaminated. Four of these are known or believed to have less than 10km of contamination and should be well placed to complete clearance soon. However, the number of States Parties on track to achieve their obligations, and to clear all contaminated areas within their current deadlines appears to be decreasing. Only two States Parties - Somalia and South Sudan – still work towards their original clearance deadlines. The other 8 contaminated States Parties have all requested one or more extensions to their clearance deadline, including Chad, Germany and Laos this year.

Risk education remains crucially important. People continue to live with cluster munition contamination in a total of 28 States and other areas. In some countries, the socioeconomic impacts of conflicts increased risk-taking activities. People are forced to rely on harmful coping mechanisms to survive. Such hardships often disproportionately affect the most vulnerable sectors of society, including refugees and displaced persons.

We urge States Parties to address the needs of people living in contaminated areas with required urgency. Ensure that risk education is context-specific, and tailored to the threat posed by cluster munitions. Ensure that it is provided to all those that may be at risk, in line with the Lausanne Action Plan's actions #27 to #30. Risk education is just as essential in states where the last bombs were dropped over fifty years ago, as it is in countries with recent contamination or hazardous contexts of ongoing conflict and insecurity.

We note with extreme concern the devastation caused by ongoing conflicts. A horrifying number of cluster munition attacks have been occurring in Ukraine, resulting in new contamination and civilians being killed and injured. Operators and donors have acted swiftly to ensure that resources and capacities are available to support clearance and risk education in Ukraine. However, the attacks, and the resulting casualties and contamination continue. Clearance and risk education, just like assistance to victims, will remain ongoing needs for many years to come. The Convention on Cluster Munitions exists in order to prevent, and to address, these terrible impacts.

States Parties absolutely need to commit to their clearance targets and to re-double their efforts to finish clearance as soon as possible so that people can live free from the threat of cluster munitions, and greater resources can be made available.

In parallel, all States Parties absolutely and urgently need to redouble efforts to do all they can to prevent any future use and additional harm caused by these weapons.

These next two years of the Lausanne Action Plan will be crucial for State Parties to demonstrate their commitment and momentum to achieve the ambitious goals of the convention, and to work together for protection of civilians and safer world.

Thank you.