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## **United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action**

### **Convention on Cluster Munitions 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of States Parties Statement under agenda item 10 (c) Clearance and Destruction of Cluster Munitions and Risk Education**

Geneva, 11 September 2024

*Statement Delivered by Stephen Robinson, UNDP*

Madam President,<sup>1</sup> Excellencies,

There is no doubt that cluster munitions have threatened millions of civilians and hindered sustainable development over the past decade. Over the years, the United Nations mine action programmes have cleared tens of thousands of cluster munitions remnants.

United Nations programmes have supported efforts to address the threats posed by cluster munitions in Azerbaijan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libya, Myanmar, South Sudan, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine, Vietnam, Yemen, and the territory of Western Sahara. The United Nations is actively engaged in the clearance and destruction of cluster munitions and in providing risk education to reduce the threat and enable humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding activities. I would like to highlight a few countries where the UN is working.

In Afghanistan, United Nations implementing partners have cleared much of the cluster munitions remnants. However, nine square kilometers of land remains contaminated across four Afghan provinces. The United Nations Mine Action Service through the Mine Action Technical Centre and the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan are facing a critical funding shortage. Most national mine action organizations are on the verge of closure. The Programme has the capacity to clear the contamination and a significant number of trained personnel who remain unemployed but are ready for deployment should funds become available. Approximately US\$ 1.2 million is required to clear these areas, which would mark a significant milestone in completing the eradication of cluster munition contamination in Afghanistan.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao ODR) is another country where cluster munitions remnants have endangered communities and hindered development for an extended

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<sup>1</sup> Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Mexico, Francisca E. Mendez Escobar.



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period. The United Nations Development Programme has been supporting the mine action sector since the mid 1990s, building national capacities to address the threat.

UNDP works closely with the Government in supporting ongoing clearance and coordination efforts as well as promoting the strategic vision of the government where sustaining UXO services to impacted communities in the worst affected areas of the country beyond the immediate future is a priority. With the massive levels of contamination still left to be cleared, work in the sector has decades yet to continue. UNDP is working with the Government of Lao PDR to drive longer-term approaches to the contamination problem not only to drive efficiency and effectiveness, but also to ensure sustained services for impacted communities beyond Lao PDR's 18<sup>th</sup> SDG. As the country moves towards Least Developed Country (LDC) status - expected in 2026 – it remains a priority for UNDP to work hand-in-hand with the Government to ensure that no-one is left behind and that victims claim their rights, that accidents are kept to the absolute minimum through effective risk education campaigns and clearance work, and that socio-economic impact of unexploded ordnance is mitigated.

In South Sudan, over the past ten years, the United Nations Mine Action Service and its partners, have successfully cleared 25,962 unexploded cluster munitions. Through close collaboration with the National Mine Action Authority (NMAA), 33 square kilometres of land previously contaminated by cluster munitions have been surveyed and cleared. As of July 2024, 9 square kilometers of land remain on the national database as contaminated. Survey and clearance efforts are challenging due to the high number of cluster munitions spread across vast areas, some of which are not mapped or mixed with scrap metal, making detection difficult. Additionally, inaccessibility of remote areas, insecurity, floods, and long rainy seasons often hamper clearance.

The United Nations remains committed to supporting the Convention's implementation and to assisting national mine action authorities prepare reports to the CCM bodies along with a work plan to expedite clearance and destruction of cluster munitions remnants and deliver risk education.

The United Nations once again reiterates that meeting clearance obligations will rely on long-term donor support. Lack of funding has been highlighted as impeding progress in the cases



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of Afghanistan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, South Sudan, and the Syrian Arab Republic, amongst others.

The United Nations also appreciates the work of the Mine Action Review, which provides useful recommendations to improve programme management.

Excellencies,

Risk education is crucial in helping civilians avoid risks and in supporting survey and clearance efforts through community reporting of submunition contamination. Children are disproportionately affected by explosive ordnance and require tailored risk education. In 2023, UNICEF and partners reached 8 million children with risk education, of whom, approximately 47% were girls.

The UN has intensified efforts to integrate explosive ordnance risk reduction into humanitarian and development plans. In 2023, UNICEF succeeded in including explosive ordnance risk education in various sectors such as child protection, education, health, nutrition, water and sanitation in 19 countries. In Myanmar, a country increasingly contaminated by explosive ordnance, with increasing evidence on the use of cluster munitions<sup>2</sup>, the Mine Action Area of Responsibility has launched an interactive social media campaign to disseminate messaging to communities in hard-to-reach areas.

Survivors of accidents can also be effective messengers for risk education and providers of peer support to other victims. A pilot project in the Syrian Arab Republic had positive protection outcomes but was forced to suspend operations due to insufficient funding. The lack of funding for mine action is a major concern for the United Nations and its non-governmental partners.

The United Nations once again encourages that more attention be given to risk education. Consideration should be given to appointing within the framework of the Convention a States Party

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<sup>2</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/briefing-paper-cluster-munition-production-and-use-myanmarburma-august-2023-tracking-progress-toward-world-free-landmines-and-cluster-munitions-enemy>



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as an explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) coordinator or champion within the Coordination Committee.

Thank you.

**END**