

Comments on Afghanistan's Article 4 Extension Request

Intersessional Meetings, Convention on Cluster Munitions, 7-8 April 2025

Thank you Chair.

The Cluster Muniton Coalition (CMC) thanks Afghanistan for its revised extension requests. We also thank the Coordinators and the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) for the support provided to Afghanistan in this process.

Cluster muniton remnants in Afghanistan continue to cause new casualties, threaten thousands of people, hinder access to essential land for agriculture and grazing, and undermine the livelihoods of affected communities.

While hundreds of casualties from cluster munitions have been officially recorded, the actual number is likely much higher. Many incidents attributed to explosive remnants of war (ERW) may, in fact, be caused by cluster muniton remnants. Victims' access to appropriate services remains limited, particularly in remote and rural areas, where the needs are most acute—exacerbated by steadily decreasing funding.

In its extension request Afghanistan has demonstrated its commitment to addressing contamination with an ambitious two-year work plan aiming to release all remaining contaminated land—approximately 9 km²—by 1 March 2028. However, achieving this goal will require a more than **six-fold increase in land release output** compared to the past two years. This is only feasible with a major increase in available resources. We encourage Afghanistan to provide greater detail on how it plans to reach this target, and to ensure the plan remains realistic given current and anticipated resources.

We welcome the inclusion of a clear, costed, multi-year work plan in line with **Action 20 of the Lausanne Action Plan**. Further clarification would be helpful on how resource requirements—including the number of clearance teams—were determined, and whether lessons learned, particularly regarding the presence of other ERW during clearance operations, have been adequately integrated into the planning process.

Afghanistan also underscores the importance of risk education and affirms that sufficient capacity exists to continue outreach in affected communities. However, it would be beneficial to clarify whether specific risk groups—such as returnees—will be targeted during the extension period, and whether risk education for these groups will continue.

The budget presented is clear, and we appreciate Afghanistan's efforts to mobilize international support. We commend the establishment of a **Resource Mobilization Team**, along with three fundraising teams focused on engaging national sources, regional donors, UN agencies, and both current and prospective international donors.

Nonetheless, the current funding landscape for mine action in Afghanistan is deeply concerning. According to Monitor data, international funding to Afghanistan dropped by **60% in 2023 compared to 2022**. The United States was the principal donor supporting cluster muniton remnant clearance up to 2022, but no national funds are currently allocated for land release activities.

This decline in funding, particularly from the US, presents a serious obstacle to meeting Afghanistan's **Article 4** clearance deadline. Notably, the **Mine Clearance Planning Agency (MCPA)**—identified in the work plan as the lead clearance operator by 2027—has historically relied exclusively on US funding.

We urge the international community to provide sustained support for Afghanistan's clearance efforts. At the same time, we call on the Afghan government to contribute national resources toward fulfilling its obligations under the **Convention on Cluster Munitions**, to ensure successful completion by **1 March 2028**.