

NPA Opening remarks on Agenda Item 3(j)(iii): Significant budget cuts impacting on the implementation of operative actions under the CCM

**Intersessional Meetings Convention on Cluster Munitions
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I'd like to start by thanking Mr. President, Coordinator Austria, and the ISU, for including this critical discussion on the agenda. This is urgent and highly relevant, and having a space for open and honest conversations about the challenges we face and the best ways to address them is not just valuable—it's essential.

Our sector is experiencing a fundamental change in its funding landscape—recent U.S. freeze and its ongoing review of its foreign aid, followed by other key donors announcing cuts in their aid budgets due to economic constraints and increased military spending. On top of decreasing funding trend that we have already been witnessing for a while. These developments have created a great deal of uncertainty and put the sector in a situation that requires us to adapt. We need to find constructive solutions that will allow us to meet the needs on the ground and to continue delivering what is needed to release land for safe and productive use and to implement the legal obligations under the Convention.

The implications of the overall cuts in overseas aid are far-reaching. For people living in affected areas, this is not just about policy; it's about their safety, their homes, and their futures. Also looking at the consequences of unexpected halts to operations, and subsequent restarting of field activities or even whole programmes - the implications are truly profound. Unplanned downtime undermines the progress towards fulfilling the Convention's obligations, with significant impacts on the lives of affected communities and the thousands of people working in mine action, along with their families. These sudden disruptions inevitably demand even greater resources.

The credibility and effectiveness of the Convention are also at risk. With conflicts, climate change, and natural disasters fuelling more displacement that might result in the movement of people into contaminated areas, we're likely to see an even bigger humanitarian challenge ahead. It's in everyone's interest to make sure that people have a safe place to live and work, enabling them to remain where they choose to be.

So, how do we adapt? How do we become even more effective and more fit for purpose in this new reality? How do we make sure that we continue to meet the needs on the ground that are likely to be growing in the future?

What the past months have shown us is that relying on the same small group of traditional donors is not sustainable. It has made it clear how vulnerable a limited donor base can be and can have massive repercussions when unexpected changes occur. While it is essential that current donors remain committed to supporting mine action, we also need to explore how to broaden and diversify our donor base. We should be encouraging more states to contribute, but also actively seek alternative funding sources, for example philanthropic contributions or private sector partnerships. At the same time, we need to be mindful of the risks. It's essential to approach this responsibly and ensure that thorough due diligence is conducted to prevent conflicts of interest, corruption, and any actions that could undermine ethical standards and the 'do no harm' principle.

At present, we know that most funding goes to a relatively limited number of affected countries – either within or outside of the convention – while many affected States Parties with light, medium or legacy contamination receive close to nothing or far from sufficient funding to implement their obligations under the convention – often despite doing everything possible in line with their obligations. We believe that one solution lies in the establishment of a voluntary trust fund for Article 4 implementation that would allow States Parties that haven't traditionally supported mine action and which may not be able to provide substantial support or administrative clearance grants, to contribute smaller amounts, which together would create a larger funding pool. This would help ensure that affected states that might be overlooked by the priorities of major donors and that are struggling to secure funding to meet their clearance obligations under the Convention are not left behind. It could also serve as an incentive for universalisation to affected States that currently remain outside of the Convention. The need to explore the possibility of establishing such a fund has already been acknowledged and incorporated into the new Siem Reap-Angkor Action Plan under the APMBC for its Article 5 implementation. It is now important more than ever to materialize its establishment, and it should be considered for the CCM as well.

Finally, it is also important to reassess the bureaucratic challenges tied to funding. As donor countries make cuts to their aid budgets—despite increasing needs—the administrative requirements remain unchanged or in some cases even greater. For instance, extensive reporting and other procedural demands consume significant resources, which is adding strain to an already complex implementation and management process. By streamlining bureaucracy, resources could be utilized more effectively and efficiently, without compromising on accountability. The priority should be given to flexible multi-year funding and partnerships, which would contribute to reducing excessive grant management burdens and to a more sustainable and effective way of funding.

These are challenging times, but that should motivate us all equally – States Parties, including donor states, affected states, as well as operators – to work together and meaningfully contribute to the collective efforts which must focus on securing sustainable, flexible and long-term funding solutions to uphold our commitments and protect those in need.

Thank you.