

## **Lebanon's Statement – 13th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions**

**Your excellency Ambassador Carlos Sorreta,**

Allow me at the outset, on behalf of the Lebanese delegation, to extend to you and to the Republic of the Philippines our sincere congratulations on assuming the Presidency of the Thirteenth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We meet here fully committed to the objectives of the Convention and united in our humanitarian resolve.

**Excellencies, Heads of Delegations, Representatives of States and International Organizations, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

For decades, the Lebanese people have looked to the LAF and the LMAC with confidence and respect. Their trust is not misplaced. The Center has evolved into one of the most professional mine action bodies in the region, recognized not only for its national achievements, but also for the expertise it shares through its Regional School, a beacon of training and cooperation advancing the humanitarian spirit of this Convention.

By the end of 2024, Lebanon had achieved nearly 92% clearance of land contaminated by cluster munitions. This figure is not just a number. It was farmland returned, villages reopened, livelihoods restored, and hope where there had been danger. These gains were made possible by the tireless work of our national teams and the sustained support of our international partners, donors, and non-governmental organizations.

Yet today we face a tragic turning point. The recent war has reversed progress and created new, heavily contaminated areas in the South and Bekaa. The Lebanese Army has lost 12 of its EOD team members, lives given in the service of others. Their sacrifice underscores both the scale of the threat and the determination of those who continue the mission despite the risks.

Intensive shelling has destroyed thousands of homes, leaving rubble contaminated with unexploded ordnance. This rubble is one of the most dangerous legacies of the conflict. Entire neighborhoods turned into hidden Contamination. Families cannot return, and communities cannot rebuild, until every stone is made safe.

Some of these areas lie in border zones that remain inaccessible due to the presence of hostile forces preventing our teams from conducting non-technical survey or clearance operations.

To address these challenges, the Lebanon Mine Action Center is developing a national methodology for rubble removal, with strict safety protocols, prioritization mechanisms, and coordination with local authorities. This approach is designed to confront highly complex field conditions in a safe and effective manner.

Airstrikes on ammunition depots of non-state groups have further complicated the operational landscape, scattering cluster munitions into residential areas, creating new hazards in zones once considered safe, and heightening the threat to local populations.

Throughout the war, LMAC proved its full preparedness, launching missions instantly and deploying personnel wherever needed. At the same time, it intensified risk education through campaigns and community outreach, focusing on IDPs, children and other vulnerable groups. With international support, these efforts helped reduce casualty rates compared to the aftermath of the 2006 aggression.

### **Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen**

Building on this, LMAC has strengthened cooperation in recent years by signing Memoranda of Understanding with civil society organizations and Lebanese universities, while continuing to receive support from UNDP, UNMAS, ITF, the GICHD and NGO partners. These partnerships enhance coordination, and deepen community outreach—ensuring that, together, we save more lives.

Lebanon is expanding rehabilitation, awareness, and reintegration programs to support survivors with dignity. In line with Article 5, victim assistance remains a

national priority, encompassing medical care, psychosocial support, vocational training, and survivor participation in policy development.

To sustain its mission, LMAC launched a resource mobilization plan to broaden funding, strengthen coordination, and engage donors, UN agencies, and communities. Yet the challenges remain stark: economic collapse has reduced clearance teams, and insecurity since late 2023 has halted operations in the South, delaying the safe return of displaced populations.

Despite the extraordinary security and humanitarian circumstances resulting from the war, Lebanon has committed to submitting an official request in November 2024 to extend its Article 4 obligations for **four years**. This request is a responsible and realistic response to exceptional circumstances beyond our control. At the same time, Lebanon continues to fulfill its transparency obligations under Article 7, ensuring that challenges and needs are clearly communicated.

### **Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen**

Lebanon deeply values the support already provided by donor states and international organizations, which has significantly strengthened our national capacities. Yet we urgently call for continued and reinforced cooperation, particularly in survey and clearance, equipment provision, and capacity building, without which we cannot succeed.

We also reiterate our call to states not yet party to the Convention to join. Every new accession is a step toward a safer world and a decisive move to end the suffering of innocent civilians.

The challenges we face are immense, but they only strengthen our resolve. Lebanon remains committed to advancing its national and international efforts to fulfill the Convention's goals. We firmly believe that cooperation and solidarity among States Parties are the only path toward a future free of cluster munitions.

**Thank you**