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Statement by Pedro Basto

Programme Manager, Research and Innovation, GICHD

Clearance and destruction of cluster munitions remnants

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Thank you Mr President.

The mine action sector is at a decisive moment. Resources are shrinking, yet the need to protect civilians, restore livelihoods, and advance sustainable development has never been greater. Meeting these pressures requires us to modernise how we set priorities, manage risk and clearance operations.

Several obstacles hold us back, with slow progress in improving efficiency as a key challenge. For years, the sector has shown resistance to change, sometimes preferring familiar routines over new, more effective approaches. But innovation has never been lacking in mine action. From advanced sensors and affordable robotics to data-driven platforms and mobile apps, the sector has consistently generated new ideas. The challenge is that too few of these reach systematic field use.

For example, the Technical Note on Mine Action on the Cluster Munition Remnant Survey (CMRS) lays out an efficient and effective system for identifying, confirming, and refining the boundaries of hazardous areas. Yet, the application of this and other standards, which are designed to make survey and risk-based approaches central to efficient operations, remains limited. Many countries still rely heavily on clearance as the default response to cluster munition contamination, while survey remains underutilised.

A 2023 GICHD study on operational efficiency found that a deminer clears on average only 22.5 square meters per day, and it can take up to 57.5 days before a single item of explosive ordnance is located. This example highlights how resource-intensive clearance is, and why survey-led approaches are essential for increasing efficiency and impact. The wider use of CMRS could significantly reduce unnecessary use of resources, improve prioritisation, and ensure that clearance is applied where it is most needed.

Mr President,

We often hear that international standards are the bottleneck for innovation. But, in reality, it is the gap between invention and implementation, compounded by reluctance to change entrenched methods, that undermines our ability to deliver. The IMAS were developed to improve safety, efficiency, and effectiveness in mine action, and to promote a common, consistent approach across

operations. They provide guidance and establish principles that are meant to be adapted to the local context.

Strong, nationally driven standards aligned with IMAS are not a barrier to innovation; they are the foundation for it. By setting clear rules of engagement and responsibilities for all stakeholders, standards reduce duplication, speed up decisions, and provide legal protection. Rather than slowing progress, they create the stability and transparency needed for new tools and approaches to be scaled effectively.

Mr President,

Efficiency matters more than ever. With donor contributions contracting, every effort in the field must deliver the greatest return. Faster, safer clearance saves lives and supports recovery. Efficiency is not only about new technologies – it also means focusing on measurable results and letting evidence guide our choices.

It is also not about cutting corners, but rather about connecting innovation with humanitarian impact, through the rapid adoption of better practices, streamlined workflows, and data-driven decisions. This is how we can sustain progress despite financial constraints.

Thank you.