

IHLI Oral Intervention under Item Clearance and destruction of cluster munition remnants

Mr./Madam President,

The International Humanitarian Law and Youth Initiative(IHLI) fully supports the working paper submitted by Italy and France on “Protecting the environment during clearance of cluster munition remnants.” We commend the States Parties for highlighting the urgent need to integrate environmental protection and climate considerations into the implementation of Article 4.

We particularly welcome the recognition that clearance must not only restore safety but also protect ecosystems, strengthen climate resilience, and contribute to the well-being of affected communities. As youth advocates, we stress the importance of engaging affected communities, particularly young people, in environmental planning, restoration, and climate adaptation efforts. Their local knowledge and active participation are essential for achieving sustainable outcomes.

We have positive examples that can inspire States Parties to adopt youth-led strategies in line with UN on Youth, Peace, and Security. Our colleague Mai, 24 years old, from Gaza, despite the devastation and ongoing challenges, works on raising awareness about the dangers of explosive remnants of war and collaborates with international organizations to identify contaminated areas. Another colleague, Ahmed, 26 years old from Sudan, documents the experiences of affected victims and contributes to assessing potential environmental risks in contaminated zones. Their efforts demonstrate how young people can meaningfully contribute to effective, environmentally responsible clearance.

Secondly, we encourage stronger engagement with UN mechanisms to raise awareness. We welcome the important steps taken by the Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes, particularly in integrating the risks posed by conventional weapons, including landmines and cluster munitions. We encourage further awareness-raising on the environmental consequences of these weapons, which are especially severe in urban warfare contexts—leaving behind destroyed infrastructure, damaged environments, and compounding climate-related vulnerabilities.

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We therefore encourage States Parties and National Mine Action Authorities to:

- Integrate environmental and climate considerations into national mine action strategies and policies;
- Promote environmentally responsible practices throughout all stages of mine action, including reducing open burning, minimizing single-use plastics, and transitioning to renewable energy in operations;
- Develop contingency plans that account for climate-related hazards in contaminated areas to ensure that clearance remains safe, effective, and environmentally responsible.

Finally, we urge donors to support youth-led initiatives by embedding them into funding requirements, capacity-building programmes, and technical assistance.

Thank you.