

From Vientiane to Lausanne: Lessons for the next CCM Action Plan

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Introduction

This paper provides a comparative analysis of the action plans adopted under the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) since its entry into force: the Vientiane Action Plan (2010), the Dubrovnik Action Plan (2015), and the Lausanne Action Plan (2021). The analysis focuses on both elements of structure and substance, with a view to drawing possible considerations for the development of the Vientiane Capital Action Plan (VCAP) to be adopted by the Third Review Conference of the CCM (Vientiane, 14-18 September 2026).

1. Structural evolution of CCM action plans

The three action plans adopt different approaches to structure and the thematic clustering of commitments.

The Vientiane Action Plan (VAP) comprises 66 actions organised under eight numbered sections. These are generally concise and focused, typically reflecting a single commitment per action.

The Dubrovnik Action Plan (DAP) adopts a more compact structure, organised around seven action clusters with 32 sub-actions and 66 lettered sub-points. While this format may appear streamlined, the use of multiple sub-actions and non-numbered elements can make navigation and citation more complex.

The Lausanne Action Plan (LAP) is structured around ten thematic headings and includes 50 actions. Several actions in the LAP encompass multiple related commitments within a single action, which can affect clarity and tracking of implementation.

Taken together, these approaches highlight the importance of balancing concision and clarity. Action plans should provide straightforward guidance for implementation, while also supporting effective communication within and beyond the Convention. This has implications for both the number of actions and their organisation across the plan.

On the first point, actions that combine multiple commitments within a single formulation may reduce clarity, whereas a greater number of more focused actions – ideally reflecting one commitment per action – can facilitate understanding and implementation.

On the second, a structure such as that of the DAP, while conceptually coherent, may present challenges for quick reference, citation and communication.

Thematic organisation

Despite these differences in format, the three plans broadly cover similar thematic areas. The variation lies primarily in how these elements are organised rather than in the scope of issues addressed (see Annex for a detailed comparison).

Of the three Plans, the LAP was the one to introduce the greatest structural differences:

- The introduction of a section on guiding principles and actions, grouping cross-cutting elements such as inclusivity, the meaningful participation of women and survivors, and links with broader frameworks and processes, including those related to environmental protection, international humanitarian law and human rights law.
- The introduction of a dedicated section on risk education, separate from clearance.

The LAP also adopts more precise and updated terminology aligned with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), referring to “survey and clearance” rather than clearance alone, and to “risk education” rather than “risk reduction”.

A further structural difference concerns the treatment of elements related to the overall implementation architecture of the Convention. The VAP includes a dedicated section on “actions in support of implementation”, which brings together a range of commitments relating to transparency, national implementation measures, compliance, as well as institutional and process-related elements linked to the early phase of the Convention’s implementation. Several of these actions reflect the context of the Convention’s recent entry into force, including the establishment of a programme of work and the consideration of an implementation support unit.

In subsequent action plans, these elements are no longer grouped within a single section but are instead addressed in distinct thematic areas. Commitments on compliance, present across the three Plans, are also treated as a stand-alone section in both VAP and LAP, while they are embedded under universalization in the DAP.

The VAP also included a standalone section on partnerships, which was not retained as such in subsequent plans, although the concept has been integrated within international cooperation and assistance provisions.

The section on international cooperation and assistance in the VAP is also particularly extensive, comprising 18 actions addressed sequentially to affected States, donor States and all States Parties. This results in a relatively lengthy and compartmentalised section, which makes it more difficult to identify cross-cutting priorities and overarching directions for cooperation.

Introduction to thematic sections

The use of introductory text (chapeau) at the beginning of thematic sections varies across the three plans. The VAP does not include such framing. The DAP introduces concise chapeaux that provide a snapshot of the implementation status, offering a de facto baseline against which progress could be assessed, even in the absence of formal indicators.

In contrast, the LAP includes more extensive introductory text for each section. While this provides useful context, it can result in overlap with operational parts of the plan.

Monitoring approaches

While the LAP was the first to include a formal monitoring framework with 77 (mostly quantitative) indicators to measure implementation progress, elements of monitoring were already present in the DAP through its use of status-based chapeaux, which provided a snapshot of implementation at the time of its adoption, and aspirational results at the end of thematic sections, which provided direction but without specific measurement tools.

2. Substantive evolution across action plans

Taken together, the three action plans reflect a clear evolution in the Convention's history and implementation approach. The VAP focuses on establishing the basic structures and processes required following the entry into force of the Convention. The DAP builds on this foundation by refining and specifying commitments. The LAP adopts a more strategic and integrated approach to implementation that is evident in several elements:

- First, the LAP integrates earlier references to international humanitarian law, human rights law and development frameworks more systematically, explicitly linking Convention implementation to broader humanitarian, development, peacebuilding and environmental agendas.
- Second, the LAP strengthens the use of data to inform planning, prioritisation and targeting across all thematic areas, moving beyond activity-based approaches towards more outcome-oriented frameworks.
- Third, the LAP places stronger emphasis on sustainability, including the development of national capacities that extend beyond the completion of clearance obligations, enabling continued responses to new or previously unknown contamination, as well as ongoing support to survivors and other victims.

3. Evolution within core thematic areas

Core CCM obligations

Across core Convention obligations, the action plans reflect a consistent trajectory towards greater specificity, integration with broader global objectives and strategic orientation:

- Universalisation has evolved from general promotion of the Convention towards more structured engagement, including through political and military dialogues, the reinforcement of the norm against activities prohibited by the CCM and a call to condemn “any instances of documented use by any actor.” (LAP, Action 11.b).
- Stockpile destruction and survey and clearance show a similar trajectory, moving from basic planning and capacity establishment towards the incorporation of international standards and the development of evidence-based, costed and multi-year national strategies or plans, supported by information management systems.
- Risk education and victim assistance have expanded in scope and increasingly adopt more integrated approaches, linked to national systems and international frameworks that go beyond disarmament or mine action.
- International cooperation and assistance has also evolved towards more strategic, partnership-based approaches.

Other themes

Across the three plans, gender and diversity considerations have evolved significantly, from discrete integration within selected thematic sections – initially with a primary emphasis on victim assistance – to the introduction of a related guiding principle and the subsequent integration across all operational commitments. The LAP also marks greater terminological precision, referring to women, girls, boys and men, diverse populations and all ages, as well as a stronger emphasis on data disaggregation as an evidence base to identify needs and tailor responses.

Inclusion and meaningful participation also feature prominently in the LAP, both as guiding principles and as elements integrated across thematic sections, with particular attention to the participation of women, victims – including survivors – and affected communities.

Other cross-cutting themes and their evolution are summarized in the table below:

Theme	Vientiane (2010)	Dubrovnik (2015)	Lausanne (2021)
Innovative finance	Innovative financing for victims [VI.29]	Innovative financing for victims [IV.4.1]	Innovative funding sources [ICA, #38]
Innovation	n/a	Clearance methods/tech; cooperation practices [III.3.7, V.5.5c]	research and development of innovative survey and clearance methodologies [Survey and clearance, #21]
Information management	Injury surveillance systems released area data [VI.22]; [V.16]	Functioning databases for contamination [III.3.5]	National IM system sustainable/disaggregated [Guiding principles, #7]; functioning systems [Survey and clearance, #24]
Mine action standards	National standards/procedures [V.15,17]	International/national standards [III.3.1c, 3.3a]	National standards per IMAS [Guiding principles #6, Victim assistance #32]
National plans/strategies	Clearance plans; comprehensive plans [V.13, VII.33]	Clearance strategies; disability/VA plans [III.3.3a, IV.4.1]	Evidence-based/costed strategies [Guiding principles #2, Stockpile destruction #12, Survey and clearance #19]

Across all these areas, successive action plans reveal an evolution that is both terminological and indicative of a broader shift towards more strategic, long-term and sustainable approaches. For example, earlier references to “plans”, primarily in the context of clearance, evolve into evidence-based and costed strategies and accompanying work plans applied more consistently across Convention implementation.

References to innovative financing, initially limited to victim assistance, are also later broadened

to encompass “innovative funding sources” in the section on cooperation and assistance. Similarly, innovation evolves from limited references to methods and cooperation practices to a more explicit focus on research and development, albeit still largely within survey and clearance.

The evolution is particularly notable in information management, which shifts from data collection towards more comprehensive systems and processes. Conversely, some areas show less linear progression, such as references to mine action standards, which explicitly align with IMAS only in the LAP, despite their earlier existence.

While the plans reflect growing attention to several enabling factors, other themes that currently receive significant global attention – such as localisation, conflict sensitivity and climate resilience – are not explicitly reflected.

4. Key considerations for the VCAP

The analysis of previous action plans offers some useful indications that States Parties could consider towards the elaboration of the VCAP.

First, maintaining a clear and coherent thematic structure will be essential. This includes preserving distinct sections for core areas such as survey and clearance, risk education and compliance, while avoiding fragmentation or unnecessary overlap across the Plan.

Second, the use of concise, status-oriented chapeaux – drawing on the Dubrovnik Action Plan – could help anchor commitments in the implementation record and provide a practical reference point, or baseline, for monitoring progress.

Third, retaining a set of guiding principles would support coherence across thematic areas and ensure consistent integration of cross-cutting elements such as information management, inclusion, links with broader humanitarian, development and peace efforts and the use of international standards.

Fourth, a monitoring framework should be maintained, while ensuring that indicators remain realistic, proportionate and aligned with available data sources, so as to avoid excessive reporting burdens.

Finally, the sequencing between actions and indicators will be important. Indicators should be developed once actions are agreed, and may benefit from combining quantitative and qualitative elements to better capture progress.

5. Conclusion

The three previous action plans provide a strong foundation for the development of the VCAP. Their evolution reflects a shift towards greater strategic coherence, integration and results-oriented implementation. The VCAP offers an opportunity to build on these foundations by refining existing approaches, addressing remaining gaps, and streamlining structure where needed, while ensuring a clear framework with stronger correspondence between actions and indicators.

Annex: Structure and thematic organisation of previous CCM action plans

Vientiane (VAP) – (n. of actions)	Dubrovnik (DAP) – (n. of sub-actions)	Lausanne (LAP) – (n. of actions)
I. Introduction	Introduction	Introduction
II. Partnerships (1)	(Embedded under cooperation & assistance)	(Embedded under chapeau ICA + mention in action 39)
n/a	n/a	Guiding principles and actions (9)
III. Universalisation (6)	Action one: Universalization (3 sub-actions)	Universalisation of the Convention and its norms (2)
IV. Stockpile destruction (2)	Action two: Stockpile destruction (5)	Stockpile destruction (6)
V. Clearance and destruction of cluster munition remnants and risk reduction activities (10)	Action three: Clearance and risk reduction education (8)	Survey and clearance (9)
		Risk education (4)
VI. Victim assistance (13)	Action four: Victim assistance (4)	Victim assistance (7)
VII. International cooperation and assistance (18)	Action five: International cooperation and assistance (7)	International cooperation and assistance (5)
VIII. Actions in support of implementation (Architecture/partnerships) (7)		
Transparency (5)	Action six: Transparency measures (2)	Transparency measures (4)
National implementation measures (3)	Action seven: National implementation measures (3)	National implementation measures (2)
Compliance (1)	(embedded under universalization)	Measures to ensure compliance (2)