

Reflections and options regarding the Convention's machinery:

Elements for discussion regarding institutional aspects of the ISU

Submitted by the President of the Third Review Conference

I. Introduction

1. Article 12.2(a) of the Convention on Cluster Munitions provides that one of the purposes of the Review Conference is “to review the operations and status of this Convention”.
2. The Review Conference therefore provides an opportunity for States Parties to review the institutional machinery supporting the Convention and, where appropriate, to consider how such arrangements may continue to support effective implementation of the Convention and the Action Plan to be adopted at the Third Review Conference (3RC).
3. The Implementation Support Unit (ISU) forms an integral part of this institutional architecture. Since its establishment, States Parties have progressively developed and refined the ISU institutional setup institutional setup, including through decisions concerning its mandate, functioning, financing, hosting arrangements and leadership, with a view to strengthening the ISU and supporting its effective functioning in fulfilling its mandate. This setup has continued to be considered and further strengthened through decisions adopted by Meetings of States Parties and Review Conferences.
4. Against this background, this paper provides a concise overview of the existing institutional setup of the ISU and relevant developments during the current review cycle and highlights matters that States Parties may wish to consider further, without prejudging the outcome of that consideration.

II. Background and existing setup

5. The ISU was established to support the President, the President-designate, the Coordination Committee, Coordinators and States Parties in implementing the Convention. Its functions include, inter alia, supporting formal and informal meetings, providing substantive and technical assistance, facilitating implementation and universalization efforts, and maintaining relevant institutional knowledge and expertise. Its standing mandate is set in the ISU Directive, adopted by the Second Meeting of States Parties (2MSP).¹
6. The Fourth Meeting of States Parties (4MSP) subsequently decided to establish the ISU under the hosting arrangement with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and mandated its President to conclude the Host Agreement and advance the recruitment of the ISU Director.² The ISU became operational in May 2015. Its financial procedures and first multi-year work plan and budget were adopted by the First Review Conference (1RC).³
7. The ISU Director reports to the President of the Meeting of States Parties or Review Conference and is accountable to the States Parties, in accordance with the Terms of Reference adopted by the Tenth Meeting of States Parties (10MSP).⁴ The ISU is hosted by the GICHD, which provides infrastructure, administrative and other support in accordance with the Host Agreement.⁵
8. The Second Review Conference (2RC) decided that the future ISU Directors would serve a fixed four-year term, renewable once for a further four-year term, subject to the approval of States Parties. The 2RC also mandated the President of the 10MSP to elaborate a calendar and selection procedure for the recruitment of future Directors and extended the mandate of the then ISU Director by four months, until April 2023, with a view to enabling an overlap between the outgoing and incoming Directors.⁶

¹ CCM/MSP/2011/WP.9, ISU Directive, as adopted by 2MSP, CCM/MSP/2011/5, paragraph 29 (c).

² CCM/MSP/2013/6, paragraph 31.

³ CCM/CONF/2015/7, Annex IV, Implementation Support Unit 2016-2020 Work Plan and Budget, and Annex V, Financial Procedure for the Implementation Support Unit.

⁴ CCM/MSP/2022/12, Annex I, Terms of Reference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions Implementation Support Unit Director, section I.

⁵ CCM/MSP/2014/INF.1, Agreement between the States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining on the Hosting of the Implementation Support Unit. The Host Agreement was signed on 2 August 2014, entered into force on 11 August 2014 and was subsequently endorsed by the 5MSP.

⁶ CCM/CONF/2021/6, paragraph 84(i)(b).

9. At its 10MSP, States Parties adopted the calendar and selection procedure for the recruitment of future ISU Directors, together with updated Terms of Reference (ToR) for the position.⁷ The ToR set out the functions, responsibilities and expected results and competencies of the Director and provide for a four-year appointment, renewable once for a further four-year term.⁸

10. The ISU was established by States Parties on the principles of independence, inclusiveness, transparency, accountability to the States Parties, efficiency and effectiveness.⁹ Its institutional arrangements have subsequently been further developed through the ISU Directive (CCM/MSP/2011/WP.9, as adopted by CCM/MSP/2011/5), the Host Agreement and decisions of States Parties. These arrangements operate alongside the meeting and secretariat arrangements set out in the CCM Rules of Procedure (CCM/MSP/2010/3).

11. Different aspects of the ISU have continued to be considered through the regular processes of Meetings of States Parties. The Thirteenth Meeting of States Parties (13MSP), *inter alia*, considered the ISU's annual report and work plan and budget, as well as the financial procedures of the ISU and the review of the Host Agreement between States Parties and the GICHD.¹⁰

III. Developments during the current review cycle

12. During the current review cycle, the institutional and administrative processes supporting the ISU have continued to evolve, including through consideration of administrative and financial aspects and measures aimed at strengthening transparency, continuity and the effective delivery of its mandate.

13. As part of these efforts, work was undertaken to further strengthen the ISU's internal performance management processes, including through the design of an internal performance review framework aligned with the ISU's key result areas as defined by States Parties in 2015. The framework provides a structured basis for reviewing performance and supporting the effective delivery of the ISU's mandate.¹¹

14. The arrangements for hosting the ISU have also continued to be reviewed. Pursuant to the decision of the Twelfth Meeting of States Parties (12MSP), the third triannual review of the Host Agreement between States Parties and the GICHD was undertaken in 2025. The 13MSP reaffirmed the Host Agreement and its previous reviews in 2017 and 2020, and noted the overview of the review process contained in CCM/MSP/2025/18.¹²

15. The 2RC had previously noted that significant synergies had been achieved through the provision of administrative support and that the scope for further measures in this area appeared largely exhausted. It also recognized that a formal merger of the CCM ISU with other implementation support units would be complex and multifaceted.¹³ During the current review cycle, no further steps towards a formal merger have been pursued, while informal coordination and cooperation with other implementation support units have continued where this supports implementation and efficiency.

16. The current review cycle has also highlighted the importance of continuity, institutional memory and effective management of information and resources in supporting sustained implementation of the Convention.

17. The current ISU Director assumed office on 1 May 2023. Her initial four-year term is therefore expected to conclude on 30 April 2027. Renewal for a second and final four-year term is subject to the approval of States Parties, in accordance with the decision of the 2RC.¹⁴ Consideration of a possible renewal will therefore arise during the 14MSP cycle.

18. During the current review cycle, States Parties have continued to consider institutional aspects of the ISU in support of its functions and the implementation of the Convention. Views expressed at the First Preparatory Meeting for the 3RC underscored the importance of efficiency and cost-effectiveness, as well as clarity and alignment among the different elements of the Convention's institutional machinery.

⁷ CCM/MSP/2022/12, paragraph 53.

⁸ CCM/MSP/2022/12, paragraph 53 and Annex I, Terms of Reference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions Implementation Support Unit Director; see also CCM/MSP/2022/WP.2, Draft decision on the selection procedure for the recruitment of future Convention on Cluster Munitions Implementation Support Unit Directors.

⁹ CCM/MSP/2011/5, paragraph 29(b). The principles are also reflected in CCM/MSP/2014/INF.1.

¹⁰ CCM/MSP/2025/21, paragraphs 88-89; see also CCM/MSP/2025/9, CCM/MSP/2025/10, CCM/MSP/2025/17 and CCM/MSP/2025/18.

¹¹ CCM/MSP/2025/9, paragraph 123, second bullet.

¹² CCM/MSP/2025/21, paragraph 89; see also CCM/MSP/2025/18.

¹³ CCM/CONF/2021/6, paragraph 120.

¹⁴ CCM/CONF/2021/6, paragraph 84(i)(b); CCM/MSP/2022/12, Annex I.

IV. Possible way forward

19. In light of the above, the Third Review Conference may wish to:

(a) reaffirm the important role of the ISU in supporting States Parties in the implementation and universalization of the Convention and exchange views on various aspects of the institutional setup of the ISU, with a view to continuing to strengthen its effectiveness, efficiency and cost-effectiveness, as appropriate; and

(b) mandate the President of the 14MSP to continue to engage on considerations regarding the ISU setup, where necessary and, to take the necessary steps in relation to the forthcoming consideration of the possible renewal of the Director for a second and final four-year term, in accordance with the decisions of States Parties and the applicable Terms of Reference.