

Statement by Mine Action Review
Agenda Item 8: General exchange of views
Third Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions
14–18 September 2026

Thank you, Mr President. We congratulate for it Presidency of the Review Conference and warmly thank Lao PDR for its dedicated efforts to support and further implementation of our treaty.

It is poignant to be convening here in Lao PDR—the State most heavily contaminated by cluster munition remnants—some 16 years after the Convention’s entry into force and Lao PDR’s presidency of the First Meeting of States Parties.

In the intervening years, Lao PDR has made remarkable progress in implementing Article 4: pioneering cluster munition remnant survey (CMRS) as an evidence-based methodology to confirm contamination and avoid clearing uncontaminated land; developing a strong national strategy underpinned by political will and national ownership; collaborating effectively with implementing partners; and integrating gender and diversity into its national UXO programme. More recently, it has made important progress in incorporating environmental and climate considerations into its work. This progress is reflected in Lao PDR being the joint highest-scoring CCM State Party in Mine Action Review’s assessment of national programme performance in survey and clearance.

More than 1,000 square kilometres of CMR-contaminated area was cleared globally in the five years from the start of 2021 through to the end of 2025, with more than half a million submunitions destroyed. This is equivalent to approximately 140,000 football pitches. Remarkably, Lao PDR alone accounted for almost 30% of the area cleared globally during this period and more than 60% of the submunitions destroyed. This represents a substantial reduction in the threat posed to affected communities and demonstrates what sustained implementation of the Convention can achieve.

Lebanon, which shares Mine Action Review’s top-scoring position with Lao PDR, also deserves recognition for its sustained commitment to and strong performance in implementing Article 4 in extremely challenging circumstances.

The five years since the Second Review Conference have undoubtedly been among the most challenging in the Convention’s history. Lithuania’s withdrawal, alongside new instances of cluster munition use and transfer, has placed both the Convention and the international norm against cluster munitions under renewed pressure.

Mine Action Review is extremely concerned by the evidence of cluster munition use in Mali. This use constitutes a violation of the CCM by Mali, irrespective of whether the munitions were dropped by Malian forces or by Africa Corps. We call on Mali to conduct a rigorous, impartial and transparent investigation into the use of cluster munitions, including establishing which forces operated the aircraft that dropped the munitions, how the cluster munitions came to be in Mali, and whether any stockpiles remain on its territory.

Mali must also take steps to prevent any further use of cluster munitions on its territory, including by ensuring that both the Malian armed forces and partner forces operating in Mali are fully aware of, and comply with, the prohibition on their use. Mali must report on the extent of the resulting

cluster munition remnant contamination and clear and destroy all CMR as soon as possible, in accordance with its obligations under Article 4. Mali will also need to seek a new Article 4 deadline from the other States Parties.

All States Parties must respect, uphold and implement the Convention, both in times of peace and in periods of heightened tension and conflict. An effective response to the use of cluster munitions in Mali—both by Mali itself and by fellow States Parties—is one element of the general duty to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law.

States Parties must stand firmly behind the Convention and its humanitarian purpose: upholding its prohibitions, defending the norm against cluster munitions, and holding one another to account. This is not the time to waver, to reconsider whether cluster munitions have a place in national arsenals, or—still worse—to use, produce or transfer them. Rather, it is a time to reaffirm and strengthen commitment to the Convention and to the protection of civilians that lies at its heart.

Recommitting to the Convention must also mean recommitting to the full and timely implementation of Article 4. Since the Second Review Conference, only one State Party, Bosnia and Herzegovina, has fulfilled its Article 4 obligations. Meaningful progress should be expected of every State Party that can safely access its cluster munition-contaminated areas, and by the Fourth Review Conference in 2031, several more States Parties should have fulfilled their clearance obligations.

Achieving this will require sustained political will, leadership and national ownership from affected States Parties, matched by continued international cooperation and assistance. At a time of considerable pressure on aid budgets, the international community must maintain adequate funding for cluster munition survey and clearance so that hard-won progress is not lost and States Parties can deliver on the Convention's promise to communities that continue to live with the consequences of cluster munition use.

I thank you.