

**Statement on Clearance
7th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions
Geneva, 4 September 2017**



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you Mr. President.

In 2016, more than 140,000 submunitions were destroyed during clearance of over 88km² of contaminated area, as cited in Cluster Munition Monitor. Global clearance efforts cleared 25% more area and destroyed over 15% more submunitions than the previous year, despite decreased funding, which suggests that cluster munition clearance operations have, overall, continued efficiency gains.

The Cluster Munition Coalition commends Mozambique, a State Party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, in completing clearance of cluster munition remnants and joining the growing list of states free from contamination. [**To be confirmed:** We also welcome that the Democratic Republic of Congo, a signatory state, has now cleared the last of its cluster munition contaminated area, and will be able to declare completion soon, once verification has been completed.]

Notwithstanding these positive developments, there is however cause for concern that progress in survey and clearance is not progressing as fast as it could, *and should*, be. With the first of the Article 4 clearance deadlines now less than three years away, it is worrying that many states are not presently on track to meet their deadlines. It is also avoidable, as with political will, sustained funding, and application of efficient land release techniques, it is possible for all but the most heavily contaminated States Parties – Lao PDR and Iraq - to finish clearance within a few years and without the need for an extension.

So, what must states do to ensure that they meet not only their Convention obligations, but also their moral obligation to free affected communities from the threat posed by this especially dangerous form of unexploded ordnance as soon as possible?

First and foremost, it is essential that best land release practices to address cluster munition remnants are applied universally, recognizing that cluster munition contamination and the methodology to address it, is different to that of landmine contamination and operations. High-quality evidence-based survey should be used to confirm the location and extent of cluster munition contamination. Clearance should only be focused on areas where contamination is proven. Let us not forget there is an opportunity cost in clearance: wherever time- and cost-intensive clearance takes place in areas that prove not to be contaminated, we are delaying the release of areas that are contaminated. This opportunity cost is counted in lives and livelihoods.

In addition, each cluster munition contaminated state should also have:

- a realistic baseline of cluster munition contamination;
- a dedicated national survey and clearance plan in place to address cluster munition contamination;
- high-quality information management system to systematically collect, store, and analyse data on cluster munition contamination, survey, and clearance, disaggregated from other forms of explosive remnants of war (ERW) and mines;
- consideration and planning for residual risk and the national capacity required to address it;
- strong national mine action standards that enshrine best-practice in all aspects of survey and clearance.

The mine action community must collectively do its utmost to ensure that national survey and clearance programmes are functioning effectively and tackling cluster munition contamination efficiently, making the very best use of the finite funds available. This requires an honest, constructive, and pragmatic analysis, on a country-by-country basis, to identify remaining challenges, and how best to overcome them. We encourage all stakeholders to consider assessments of and recommendations for each national mine action programme, based on indicators that reflect international good practice, as found in Mine Action Review's "Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants" report; and hope that the report can be used as a tool to bring national authorities, clearance operators, donors, and other experts together in each affected country, to discuss and drive forward progress.