

Thematic presentation (Agenda Item 8c): Co-Coordiators on clearance and destruction of cluster munitions remnants and risk education (SWEDEN/AFGHANISTAN):

INITIAL STATEMENT

Mr President,

As it is the first time that I take the floor, let me start by thanking you for convening this meeting and congratulate you for managing to do this under the current circumstances. My delegation is very impressed by the pragmatic and innovative solution suggested by you and your team. I would also like warmly thank the Implementation Support Unit. Let me also stress that Sweden aligns itself to any statement delivered by the EU.

On behalf of Afghanistan and Sweden as Co-Coordiators on clearance and destruction of cluster munitions remnants and risk education, I would like to make the following remarks on the progress being made since the last Review Conference in 2015 as well as more specifically on the progress this year.

Mr President,

Since 2015, three state parties have completed their clearance obligations under article 4 of the Convention pertaining to clearance and destruction of Cluster Munitions One state, Mozambique, managed to do this head of its deadline in 2016. This achievement deserves to be noted. During this year, two States Parties (Croatia on 10 July and Montenegro on 21 July) declared fulfilment of their obligation. We would like to congratulate them for this. The state parties have submitted official declarations of compliance to the ISU, which are available on the CCM website under their country profiles.

As you will recall, we saw the first extension requests submitted in 2019 by Germany and LAO PDR. During this year, three additional extension requests have been submitted – by Bosna & Herzegovina, Chile, and Lebanon.

Unfortunately, five State Parties (Afghanistan, Croatia, Iraq, Lebanon and Mauretania) reported to have discovered previously unknown contaminated areas. One of these States (Mauritania) had previously declared compliance in 2013. Still, as mentioned, Croatia managed to meet its obligations. And Afghanistan has reported to be on track to complete its obligations by its deadline in 2021.

Five States Parties (Chile, Croatia, Iraq, Lebanon and Montenegro) reported on land release following non-technical surveys.

Eight States Parties (Afghanistan, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Chile, Iraq, Lao PDR, Lebanon and Mauritania) requested assistance to fulfil their obligations under Article 4.

Six States Parties (Afghanistan, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Iraq, Lao PDR, Lebanon and Montenegro) reported to have received assistance to fulfil their obligations under Article 4.

One State not Party (South Sudan) reported, in a voluntary article 7 report, to have contamination and requested assistance for clearance and risk reduction education. It also reported to have received assistance for clearance and risk reduction education.

During this year, the state parties with obligations pertaining to clearance and destruction of cluster munitions remnants and risk education have reported a number of challenges on fulfilling these. In summary: Erosion factors such as rain and floods; Difficulties in locating exact locations of cluster munition strikes; As reported by Afghanistan, cluster munition sites are located in remote and hard-to-reach areas where clearance is challenging; some have highlighted funding as a challenge; Discovering new contaminated areas continues to be a main challenge. As co-coordinators, we would also like to stress that a further challenge in this area is states parties' inability to identify the need for extension request in time to comply with the timeline required for submission (9 months before the relevant MSP or Review Conference).

We look forward to hearing from any delegations on this topic and would welcome the opportunity to share some concluding words.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Mr President,

Thank you for again giving me the floor and thank you to the delegations having addressed this issue. I would like to conclude with a few words on the way forward.

While noting several positive steps and developments, we as co-coordinators fully agree with your opening statement, Mr President, about the need to step up the rate of clearance. The lost lives and human suffering following from these munitions – so strongly highlighted in the video statement from Lao PDR – underline our common responsibility.

Moving forward, Afghanistan and Sweden would like to stress the importance of having cost-efficient and evidence-based techniques in order to confirm areas that are in need of clearance. During the past year, we – as co-coordinators on clearance and destruction of cluster munitions remnants and risk education – have sought to increase clarity, effectiveness and efficiency in the clearance methodology. There is further work to be done in this regard.

We note positive experience from the cases of Montenegro and Lebanon, which we would also like to highlight. The establishment of country coalitions in these states have proved helpful and is something that should be explored further by other states with commitments.

As co-coordinators during the past year, we have, together with the Implementation Support Unit, urged state parties to fulfil their obligation under Article 4 of the Convention, as soon as possible, or by the treaty deadline. And we have sought to encourage state parties to reach deadlines with a view to avoiding, where practically feasible, extension requests. This work will need to continue also next year.

On behalf of Afghanistan and Sweden, I thank you.