

CMC Statement on Clearance and Risk Education

CCM 10 Meeting of States Parties, Geneva, 30 August-3 September 2022



Mr. President,

The Cluster Munition Coalition thanks you for this opportunity to deliver a statement on clearance and risk education.

2021, saw some positive progress on Article 4 of the Convention. The final adoption of the Lausanne Action plan last year has provided clear and concrete goals for survey and clearance, and for risk education, with the aim to achieve significant, and sustained, progress in the period through 2026.

Progress in clearance of cluster munition remnants remained steady during first year of the new action plan. As States began to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions, mine action operations have been able to return to near-normal in many areas. The Cluster Munition Monitor reported that States Parties cleared approximately 61km² of cluster munition contaminated land and cleared and destroyed more than 81,000 submunitions during this past year. At the end of 2021, five States Parties – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile, Germany, Iraq, and Lebanon - had a clear understanding of their contamination, through evidence-based surveys, in line with the Lausanne Action Plan's Action #18.

Risk education was conducted in most States Parties to the Convention during 2021.

The Cluster Munition Monitor found increasing evidence of risk education being tailored to high-risk behaviours and activities. There was also progress in the development of approaches and messages sensitive to context and gender, age, disability, and diversity, based on data and reporting, in line with the Lausanne Action Plan's Action # 29.

In 2021 Risk education was also delivered in many non-signatories, including in Libya, Syria, and Yemen, often in the context of ongoing conflict and insecurity.

Innovations in digital risk education accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, and continue to be developed and refined.

However, despite the progress, many challenges persist. Clearance of cluster munition remnants, and risk education for impacted communities, must remain a priority for all States Parties, and must be addressed with urgency.

The Cluster Munition Monitor reported a welcome reduction in the number of cluster munition remnants casualties recorded for 2021 compared to 2020. However, the 2021 casualty figures highlight the continuing humanitarian impact of cluster munition remnants, with civilians, especially children, particularly vulnerable. Civilians account for 97% of all the 2021 casualties, and children for two thirds of known casualties. In Lao PDR, and in Lebanon, tragic incidents occurred in 2021 where groups of children were killed and injured by submunitions, while playing.

No States Parties reported completing clearance of cluster munition remnants in 2021. A total of ten States Parties remain contaminated. Six of these are known or believed to have less than 10km of contamination and should be well placed to complete clearance. However, the number of States Parties on track to achieve their obligations, and to clear all contaminated areas within their current deadlines appears to be decreasing. Since 2019, requests to extend clearance deadlines have been submitted each year. Three requests were submitted in 2021, and three more in 2022. Only Iraq and Somalia remain within their original clearance deadlines, although it seems that neither are on target to meet these deadlines. While it is recognized that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted progress in some States Parties, it is imperative that efforts are now made to recommit to targets and deadlines.

Risk education remains crucially important. People continue to live with cluster munition contamination in a total of 29 States and *other areas*. In some countries, the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic increased risk-taking activities in contaminated areas. People are forced to rely on harmful coping mechanisms to survive. In Lao PDR and Lebanon, for example, it was reported that economic hardship likely encouraged high-risk behaviors, as people sought to supplement falling incomes. Such hardships often disproportionately affect the most vulnerable sectors of society, including refugees and displaced persons.

We urge State Parties to address the needs of people living in contaminated areas. Ensure that risk education is context-specific, and tailored to the threat posed by cluster munitions. Ensure that it is provided to all those that may be at risk, in line with the Lausanne Action Plan's actions #27 to #30. Risk education is just as essential in states where the last bombs were

dropped over thirty years ago, as it is in countries with recent contamination or hazardous contexts of ongoing conflict and insecurity.

We note with extreme concern the devastating events of 2022 with the Russian invasion of Ukraine. A horrifying number of cluster munition attacks have been occurring, resulting in new contamination and so many civilians being killed and injured. Operators and donors have acted swiftly to ensure that resources and capacities are available to support clearance and risk education in Ukraine. However, the attacks, and the resulting casualties and contamination continue. Clearance and risk education, just like assistance victim, will remain ongoing needs for many years to come in Ukraine. The Convention on Cluster munitions exists in order to prevent, and to address, these terrible impacts.

States Parties absolutely need to commit to their clearance targets and to re-double their efforts to finish clearance as soon as possible so that people can live free from the threat of cluster munitions, and greater resources can be made available. These next few years of the Lausanne Action Plan will be crucial for State Parties to demonstrate their commitment and momentum to achieve the ambitious goals of the Convention, and to work together for safer world.

Lastly, we would like to take the opportunity to thank the Coordinators and the Analysis Group for their ongoing efforts to ensure timely implementation of Article 4.

Thank you.