



ICRC

Second Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions Geneva, 25-27 November 2020

International Committee of the Red Cross Statement on clearance and risk reduction education

Thank you Mr. President.

At the outset, the ICRC wishes to congratulate Croatia, Montenegro and Mozambique for having declared completion of clearance of cluster munition remnants since the last Review Conference.

The ICRC also commends those States Parties that have made progress in clearing cluster munition remnants in the past year. According to the Cluster Munition Monitor, in 2019, approximately 82km² of cluster munition contaminated land was cleared by States Parties and some 96,000 submunitions were destroyed. This represents 15% of all land cleared and more than 20% of the total number of submunitions destroyed in the first ten years since the Convention's entry into force.

Despite these welcome achievements, 10 States Parties are still contaminated by cluster munition remnants. Considering that each of these remnants continues to represent a deadly risk for civilians, including children, we cannot be complacent about the challenges that remain before us. Efforts must be increased to complete clearance within the deadlines established by the Convention.

Since the last Review Conference five States Parties have requested extension of their clearance deadlines. The ICRC wishes to stress that the Convention requires States Parties contaminated by cluster munition remnants to complete clearance "as soon as possible". Indeed, extension requests should be applied only on an exceptional basis, but not become routine. States that have been granted extensions should establish and implement clear, costed and detailed workplans for completing clearance without undue delay, maintain meaningful communications with the Analysis Group on Article 4 Extensions, and submit detailed progress reports on an annual basis. In this regard, we commend the Analysis Group on Article 4 Extensions for its thorough and diligent work over the past year.

Mr. President,

The ICRC wishes also to stress the importance of risk education in protecting affected communities from explosive risks, especially when clearance is not immediately feasible. While five States Parties with Article 4 obligations have provided detailed information on risk reduction education efforts since the last Review Conference, relatively limited attention and

resources have been afforded to risk education in the past years. It is essential for affected States Parties to integrate resourced and context-appropriate risk education programs into overall clearance actions, in accordance with recognized international standards such as the International Mine Action Standards, as well as systematically assess and report on progress.

The ICRC, on its part, endeavours to mitigate the impact of contamination of landmines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war on the civilian population through a flexible and multidisciplinary approach. In 2019, the ICRC, often in cooperation with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, carried out projects to address the threat posed by weapon contamination in 51 contexts, such as training in risk awareness and safer behaviour, data collection and information management, and other risk reduction initiatives. A booklet entitled [*Weapon Contamination in Urban Settings: An ICRC Response*](#) and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's guidelines on risk awareness and safer behaviour (RASB) entitled [*Increasing Resilience to Weapon Contamination through Behaviour Change*](#) were also published in English, and the latter was translated into Arabic, French and Spanish.

We are concerned that the global COVID-19 pandemic may have augmented risks associated with cluster munition remnant contamination to affected communities and vulnerable groups, in particular refugees and IDPs. On one hand, the pandemic has exacerbated the existing difficulties of civilians living in conflicts in gaining access to essential resources and services, which may lead people to resort to risky behaviours to earn their livelihood, exposing them to danger posed by contaminated area in some contexts; on the other hand, physical distancing and other restrictive measures have posed new challenges to conducting risk education and other risk reduction activities. In this respect, we are pleased to share that the ICRC together with Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies continued to disseminate RASB messages in contexts such as Iraq and Syria, using alternative virtual or other distant communication channels.

To conclude, Mr. President, the fact that new casualties due to cluster munition remnants were recorded in 10 countries including three States Parties over the last year underscores the critical importance of completing clearance of contaminated areas, of international cooperation and assistance to make this happen as soon as possible, and of reinforcing risk education measures in the meantime. Every remaining cluster munition remnant threatens lives and limbs, and affected communities.

Thank you.