

## Third Inter-sessional Meetings of the Convention on Cluster Munitions 16-18 April 2013

### GICHD Statement on Clearance

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Thank you Mr Chair,

According to Article 4, paragraph 3, *each State Party shall take into account international standards - including the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).*

IMAS are the standards in force for all UN mine action operations and an important reference for other operations – both commercial and military. They have been developed through a progressive series of consultative processes involving a broad range of mine action stakeholders and are maintained by the GICHD on behalf of the United Nations. Although the framework of the IMAS and principal standards are well established they continue to evolve and to develop.

The Land Release IMAS Series, introduced in 2009 came up for review in 2012 in accordance with IMAS policy. These are the most important of the International Mine Action Standards and changes within them prompt further changes to the rest of the IMAS series – as well as changes to National Mine Action Standards and to Standard Operating Procedures. The content of the IMAS also affect structures of mine action databases and reporting formats – including those to donors and reports under convention obligations.

The Land Release IMAS are particularly relevant for the implementation of Article 4. I take the opportunity to briefly update you on these Standards which have been recently amended, and screened in the specific context of contamination resulting from Cluster Munitions.

The standards have been discussed and reviewed over an 18 month period by more than 100 individuals from 25 organisations. They were overwhelmingly endorsed last month by UN agencies, national authorities, commercial and NGO operators on the

IMAS Review Board. A final 2 day workshop also included representatives of the ICBL, ISU-APMBC and the Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor.

### ***Slide 1***

The Land Release Process by definition involves Non-Technical Survey, Technical Survey and Clearance activities. Too much land remains subject to full clearance in many programmes – when significant areas can often be cancelled or reduced through less expensive and more rapid non-technical or technical survey approaches.

Reflecting this general theme, the amended Land Release IMAS places greater emphasis on evidence based approaches to increase operational efficiency - particularly the importance of high quality and continuous NTS activities to better define starting points for operations and to support decision-making when operations are underway.

### ***Slide 2***

Article 2.11 defines cluster munition areas under the convention as ‘areas known or suspected to be contaminated by cluster munition remnants’

In the new IMAS, ‘known’ areas are termed Confirmed Hazardous Areas (CHAs) where there is direct (physical) evidence of CMR. Where indirect evidence exists such areas are termed Suspect Hazardous Areas. National Mine Action Standards should define thresholds where criteria of indirect evidence are met to avoid exaggeration of a perceived problem. There are strong arguments that in some situations contamination of CMR should be recorded as points in databases until further survey has determined the actual extent of the contaminated areas.

The IMAS also promotes Technical Survey approaches to limit instances where Suspect Hazardous Areas are exposed to full clearance. Due to the nature of CMR contamination ‘known areas’ can frequently be defined by clear footprints or inferred through identification of fragments of paleo-footprints. Work on the development of approaches to Technical Survey to define CHA has been undertaken by the GICHD and further advanced and field-tested by operators – particularly through the extensive work of Norwegian Peoples Aid.

Many national databases suffer from poor clarification of the types of contamination in an identified area - and the nature and extent of both mine and CM contamination is often over stated. The amended IMAS places greater focus on recording the specific categories of contamination to facilitate more accurate database queries in order to:

- Better clarify the Cluster Munition component of the overall contamination,
- Better manage and analyse survey and clearance operations and
- support greater clarity in reporting – including standardization of the ‘products’ of survey and clearance activities where:
  - m2 cancelled through NTS
  - m2 reduced through TS, and
  - m2 cleared, are disaggregated

Standards on land release provide clear guidance for survey and clearance operations but National Standards must be adjusted to provide detail and reflect local conditions. The GICHD regularly organizes trainings on land release activities. The next training will take place in Jordan from 12 to 16 May this year - targeting senior operations staff from 15 different national programme. As part of our global work plan in 2013, the GICHD includes significant on-going support for the national authorities in Cambodia, Vietnam and Lao PDR.

To conclude, we welcome the background paper on clearance circulated by the President. We would like to suggest adding the GICHD among the organisations referred to on page 1. In addition, due to its significance, a reference to the amended IMAS on Land Release could be added on the same page. Last, on page 3, we can only emphasize the need for a proper database with geo references to record suspected and confirmed hazardous areas. A reference to the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA), installed in more than 65 programmes, could also be added - as IMSMA is the most commonly used database in mine action programmes. We will provide these additional comments in writing to the secretariat for consideration.

Thank you Mr Chair.