

Statement delivered by  
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*CLEARANCE SEGMENT*

Chair,

The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining continues to support countries in their efforts to clear anti personal landmines, and to assist progress towards the collective completion goal of 2025.

There are three critical areas of operational support concerning the Convention where the GICHD is particularly focused:

1. Promotion of quality Non Technical Survey activities to better define contamination
2. Strategic planning incorporating Residual Risk as part of the LR process, and
3. Clarification on Improvised Landmines and how they relate to the Treaty and to IMAS

**1. Non Technical Survey**

First, we believe that the application of good practices in Land Release and the use of high-quality, evidence-based survey remains the number one priority to assist countries that are falling short of meeting Article 5 deadlines.

The GICHD continues to train senior field staff across the sector at an advanced NTS course in Hammelburg, Germany. This year, 7 woman and 16 men have been trained from 15 country programmes. For participating National Authorities this course provides confidence for them to work with international partners on NTS initiatives that considerably reduce the areas of suspicion in accordance with IMAS. In Sri Lanka, following the 2015 course, a pilot NTS in Mannar District conducted by MAG and monitored by the NMAC reduced the Suspected Area from 23sqkm to 2.3sqkm. That is a reduction of 90%. The success of this pilot expanded the resurvey to a national level.....

In-country training also continues. In Colombia (which is at a critical phase of defining areas of operations) the GICHD continues to focus on NTS training of the military which is fast expanding its capacity. The ability of the military survey teams to embrace good survey practices will be essential if the ambitious plan of Colombia to complete by 2021 is to be realised.

In Thailand, GICHD's efforts - in collaboration with TMAC & NPA - have also expedited the land release process with NTS activities cancelling over 80% of previous Suspected Hazardous Areas in many provinces. For example, in Ubon Province on the Cambodian border, 87% of areas are expected to be cancelled. While Thailand will seek a further extension request - the completion plan will now be based on a dramatically reduced area for operations.

There are currently no regulations concerning the training of NTS personnel beyond the guidelines of the IMAS. The GICHD (and principle partners) in 2017 plan to develop an 'NTS Essentials' on-line course which will be accessible globally – from military teams in Colombia to local partners operating remotely in Iraq & Syria.

It is hoped that donors and national authorities will embrace the initiative: 'NTS Essentials' and - once developed – demand that all personnel pass the on-line course – as a prerequisite to additional NTS training. This will significantly raise the bar on the quality of survey activities, ensure compliance with IMAS, help standardise field approaches - and provide greater confidence that areas identified for more targeted operations are actually contaminated.

## **2. Residual Contamination**

A second critical area of GICHD support to assist 'Completion' concerns Residual Risk. Residual Risk arises from residual contamination which remains after Article 5 obligations have been fulfilled. The GICHD is an ardent promoter of such understanding within the frame of the Land Release process. 'Completion' is more readily achieved when - from the outset - there is acceptance that a Residual Risk will remain and where sustainable solutions to manage long term Residual Contamination are considered early in the strategic planning process.

Through the role of facilitator for several national strategies of State Parties, the GICHD has helped ensure that Residual Contamination is embedded in the strategies of Tajikistan, Afghanistan and also in Sri Lanka. In 2017, work on strategies in Bosnia Herzegovina

Cambodia, DRC, Zimbabwe and perhaps South Sudan will provide opportunities to do the same.

### ***3. Improvised Landmines***

Finally, as we have heard - the mine action community is facing a challenge of increased use of improvised anti-personnel landmines by non-state armed groups in the Middle East and elsewhere. Devices of this nature are victim-activated and are covered by the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention. Improvised mines are not new – consider the contamination in Colombia for instance – but the increased use of these IEDs is attracting greater focus.

The GICHD - under a mandate from an IMAS IED Sub Committee - is currently drafting amendments to the IMAS to better profile Improvised Landmines in existing standards and to clarify the applicability of IMAS to counter them. This will be presented to the IMAS Review Board in February.

Fortunately, Improvised landmines do not normally have the same lifespan as industrial manufactured mines. In general they are more prone to faster aging when exposed to the elements – particularly those that rely on batteries as a power source.

To help better understand the aging process of Improvised Landmines the GICHD has just finished a scoping mission in Colombia to frame a more ambitious project in 2017 to characterise the aging process based on evidence. This project has been embraced by the Colombian authorities - as the findings will be vital in the context of priority setting and mine action strategies which should be based on principles of risk management.

Thank you