

Madam ambassador,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to start by sincerely thanking the Australian Mission for giving us the opportunity to present an overview of the Lebanon Mine Action Center (LMAC). I will highlight our obligations hoping to secure additional funds and support that will enable Lebanon to meet its due deadline according to the Convention on Cluster Munition (CCM) and to the 2011-2020 National Strategy.

In the past decade, Lebanon has been receiving financial support and other assistance from donors, international agencies, and non-governmental organizations. I would like to take the opportunity to express our deep gratitude towards our donors, especially to the European Union (EU), the United Nations Mine Action services (UNMAS), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (WRA) and others.

Lebanon represented by the LMAC is actively participating in International Meetings and Forums, lately in Zambia for the 4MSP, where all programs (including Lebanon) receive updates and exchange expertise in order to enhance their capabilities. In addition, the Center contributes in the transfer of its experience in humanitarian demining operations, MVA, MRE, and the overall management of humanitarian Mine Action Programs to the neighboring Arab Countries. In this context, the Regional Humanitarian Demining School was established in the collaboration with the French Army that will start its training in November 2013.

The LMAC is devoted to manage efficiently the funds granted and effectively using them. Allow me to clarify that Lebanon is a small country of 10452 Km<sup>2</sup> that is highly polluted in Cluster Munitions relatively to its 5 million population density. One fifth of its citizens are in direct threat of the 56 Km<sup>2</sup> contaminated areas leading to following areas prioritization:

Priority 1 (high risk): Access road, residential areas, the primary livelihoods of the citizens and infrastructure and development projects.

Priority 2 (medium risk): Cultivated agricultural lands and fields for investment.

Priority 3 (low risk): Uncultivated lands, valleys and pastures.

The priority 1 areas have been almost completely cleared; and 70 % of this areas are being used for agricultural purposes.

The 2006 hostilities by Israel resulted in heavy new contamination increased the number of Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) victims reaching a number of 441 victims. The LMAC is committed to manage

and coordinate the activities through the collaboration of the steering committee that includes governmental and nongovernmental organizations. Mine victim assistance is being directly secured by the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Social affairs, and by the local and international NGOs that are supported by donors. It should be noted that the MVA sector suffers from severe lack of funding affected by the decrease of socioeconomic conditions in the country and the ongoing security unrest. The massive influx of Syrian refugees representing one fifth of the Lebanese population are prone to the same dangers aggravating the intensity of the problem (during 2013 there had been 24 casualties, three of them are Syrian refugees including 1 child).

On the level of Mine Risk Education, the center is working in the Spirit of the Mine Ban Treaty to apply the yearly work plan of raising awareness and changing the public's perception and behaviors towards the problem of cluster munitions. The waning of funds is the key component impeding the full application of the set plan.

Lebanon is tirelessly trying to meet its obligations towards the CCM in order to become free of Cluster munitions by the year 2016. The recent National Strategy (2011-2020) based on the total amount of polluted areas and productivity levels specified the need for 30 demining teams on an annual basis. However, the national technical survey and the reclassification of the data to match the field situation showed a decrease in the productivity level due to the difficulty of work in the contaminated areas as well as the identification of 21 new targets. The remaining polluted is 18 km<sup>2</sup> constituting 34 percent of the total contaminated areas requiring 49 teams in order to fulfill our obligations instead of the 24 teams available.

I regretfully declare, as I previously did in Zambia and at the 4th International Support Group Meeting in Beirut, that it is impossible for Lebanon to meet its commitment towards freeing Lebanon of cluster munitions by 2016 without additional funding to make up for the shortages in the number of allocated clearance teams.

It is noteworthy to remind the state parties of their commitments and obligations towards the states affected by cluster munitions mentioned in article six of the CCM. The funds needed to complete the task sum up to 19 million dollars per year in contrast to the 10 million dollars currently available.

Once again, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the efforts you are conducting with the donors to remedy to the International mine and cluster munitions' problems especially in Lebanon. I hope through your efforts that this meeting will lead to an increase of funds in order to give the Lebanese people a chance to a safe life and fulfill our obligations and assistance to other affected countries.