



# GEORGIA

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Georgia should accede to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) as soon as possible.
- Georgia should ensure that all reports of cluster munition remnant (CMR) contamination are investigated as soon as possible, and necessary survey and clearance conducted as required.

## CONTAMINATION

Following clearance of a CMR contaminated area in 2014, Georgia, including Abkhazia, was believed to be free of contamination from cluster munition remnants (CMR), with the possible exception of South Ossetia, which is occupied by Russia and inaccessible to both the Georgian authorities and international non-governmental organisation (NGO) clearance operators.

In 2016, however, Georgia reported the discovery of two submunitions, destroyed by the State Security Agency of Georgia, as part of explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) call-outs in the Shida Kartli region.<sup>1</sup> In April and July 2016, local communities in this region of Georgia reported finding several submunitions since clearance was completed.<sup>2</sup> As at May 2017, The HALO Trust was in the process of conducting non-technical survey to investigate each of the call-outs. Several more submunitions have been discovered so far in 2017 during non-technical survey,<sup>3</sup> and technical survey may be needed to determine the nature

of the contamination: whether it exists but in previously undiscovered contaminated areas, results from missed items in cleared areas, or as a result of items being picked up and moved by locals.<sup>4</sup> Prior to the recently identified submunitions, the last CMR contamination was discovered and cleared in 2014, during HALO Trust operations along the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL), also in the Shida Kartli region.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, Georgia has reported that its National Mine Action Authority has not been able to conduct quality assurance (QA)/quality control (QC) in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali (in South Ossetia), and that a conclusion as to whether these regions are indeed free of CMR depends on the quality of earlier clearance.<sup>6</sup>

CMR resulted from the conflict over South Ossetia in August 2008, in which both Georgian and Russian forces used cluster munitions. After the end of the conflict and

through December 2009, The HALO Trust cleared some 37km<sup>2</sup> in Georgian-controlled territory of submunitions and other explosive remnants of war (ERW).<sup>7</sup> In May 2010, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) completed clearance of its tasked areas.<sup>8</sup>

The HALO Trust believes that the August 2008 conflict was likely to have resulted in some CMR in South Ossetia, but it has no way of determining the level of possible contamination, or what, if any, clearance may have been conducted.<sup>9</sup>

## Other Explosive Remnants of War and Landmines

Georgia remains contaminated by other unexploded ordnance (UXO) and anti-personnel mines. Following the 2008 conflict with Russia, there was evidence of a problem with UXO in South Ossetia, although its extent remains unclear. In addition, UXO contamination in Georgia persists in former firing ranges.<sup>10</sup>

## PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

In 2008, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Georgian Ministry of Defence and international NGO Information Management and Mine Action Programs (iMMAP) to establish the Explosive Remnants of War Coordination Center (ERWCC).<sup>11</sup> On 30 December 2010, the Ministry of Defence issued a decree instructing that mine action be included as part of the State Military Scientific Technical Center – known as “DELTA” – an entity within the ministry. The agreement with iMMAP ended on 31 March 2012 and the ERWCC took ownership of the mine action programme.<sup>12</sup>

Through the iMMAP project, ERWCC became the Georgian Mine Action Authority, under DELTA, tasked to coordinate and execute action to address the ERW threat.<sup>13</sup> The primary task of the ERWCC is to coordinate mine action in Georgia, including QA/QC, and to facilitate the creation and implementation of Georgian National Mine Action Standards, in accordance with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).<sup>14</sup>

### Standards

Georgian National Mine Action Standards and National Technical Standards and Guidelines (NTSG) have been drafted in accordance with IMAS and as at April 2017 were awaiting completion in coordination with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD).<sup>15</sup> Once finalised, the NTSG will be translated and sent to Parliament for approval.<sup>16</sup>

### Quality Management

Under the control of DELTA, the ERWCC now conducts QA/QC.<sup>17</sup> iMMAP has also conducted training on QA/QC for the Quality Management section of the ERWCC, the Joint Staff of the Georgian Armed Forces, and DELTA.

### Operators

The HALO Trust conducts UXO and mine clearance operations in Georgia, but no CMR clearance was undertaken in 2016.<sup>18</sup> The HALO Trust was, however, conducting CMR survey (both non-technical and technical) in 2017, and would also carry out clearance, as required.<sup>19</sup>

At the request of the Government of Georgia, the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) Trust Fund has supported Georgia in addressing its ERW problem from the August 2008 conflict. In 2010, a NATO Trust Fund project planned to provide support to establish long-term local capacity for the ERWCC in clearance and victim assistance.<sup>20</sup> As part of the project, 66 members of the Georgian Army Engineers Brigade were trained in demining, battle area clearance (BAC), and explosive ordnance disposal (EOD).<sup>21</sup> Since March 2015, these engineers have been conducting EOD of abandoned explosive ordnance (AXO) and UXO at the former ammunition storage facility at Skra.<sup>22</sup>

## LAND RELEASE

Two submunitions were discovered and destroyed in 2016, during EOD call-outs in the Shida Kartli region.<sup>23</sup> No CMR had been identified in 2015,<sup>24</sup> but in 2014, The HALO Trust cleared 1.3km<sup>2</sup> of CMR-contaminated area, which had been discovered as a result of improved security along the ABL with South Ossetia, enabling farmers to use previously inaccessible areas within Georgian-controlled territory.<sup>25</sup>

### Progress in 2017

As at May 2017, The HALO Trust was in the process of conducting non-technical survey to investigate EOD call-outs in the Shida Kartli region, during which CMR had been discovered. The HALO Trust believed that technical survey would help to explain the existence of the contamination, some of which was found several hundred metres from HALO Trust's cleared tasks.<sup>26</sup>

## ARTICLE 4 COMPLIANCE

Georgia is neither a state party nor a signatory to the CCM and therefore does not have a specific clearance deadline under Article 4. Nonetheless, it has obligations under international human rights law to clear CMR as soon as possible.

It was previously believed that, with the possible exception of South Ossetia, Georgia was now free from CMR contamination. However, HALO Trust non-technical survey in 2017, in response to EOD call-outs, has revealed CMR in the Shida Kartli region. Technical survey is required to determine the nature and extent of the contamination.

Furthermore, Georgia reported that, due to a lack of access to areas outside of its control, it cannot confirm whether or not earlier clearance in these areas was conducted to international humanitarian standards, and with the required QA/QC.<sup>27</sup>

1 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, Head of Division, DELTA, 20 June 2017.

2 Ibid.

3 Email from Irakli Chitanava, Programme Manager, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017.

4 Ibid.

5 Email from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 9 July 2015.

6 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017.

7 Explosive Remnants of War Coordination Centre, "Explosive Remnants of War Coordination Centre (ERWCC) in Facts and Figures", November 2009, p. 17.

8 Email from Jonathon "Gus" Guthrie, Programme Manager, NPA, 27 May 2010.

9 Email from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 11 March 2016.

10 Email from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 23 June 2015; and interview with Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, in Geneva, 19 February 2016.

11 iMMAP, "Establishing the New Georgian Explosive Remnants of War Coordination Centre (ERWCC)", Press release, 25 February 2009; and E. M. Hasanov and P. Nevalainen, "Mine-action Challenges and Responses in Georgia", *Journal of ERW and Mine Action*, Issue 15.3, Fall 2011.

12 Ibid.; Decree #897 issued by the Minister of Defense, 30 December 2010; and email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 20 June 2016.

13 NATO, "NATO/PfP Trust Fund Project in Georgia", January 2012, at: [http://www.mzv.cz/file/786123/Georgia\\_ERW\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_3\\_230112.pdf](http://www.mzv.cz/file/786123/Georgia_ERW_Fact_Sheet_3_230112.pdf); and email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 6 July 2015.

14 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 6 July 2015.

15 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017.

16 Interview with Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, in Geneva, 19 February 2016; and email, 3 April 2017.

17 Response to Cluster Munition Monitor questionnaire by Tom Meredith, Desk Officer, HALO Trust, 21 August 2012.

18 Email from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017.

19 Ibid.

20 NATO, "NATO/PfP Trust Fund Project in Georgia", January 2012; and emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 6 July 2015 and 20 June 2016.

21 Estonia Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Protocol V Article 10 Report, 2 April 2012; NATO/PfP Trust Fund Project in Georgia Fact Sheet, January 2012; and email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 6 July 2015.

22 Interview with Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, in Geneva, 19 February 2016; and email, 3 April 2017.

23 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 20 June 2017.

24 Emails from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 11 March 2016; and Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 23 May 2016.

25 Email from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 9 July 2015.

26 Email from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017.

27 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017.