

International Standards on Cluster Munitions Stockpile Destruction

Ian Mansfield, Deputy Director
GICHD - Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining

Background

The Convention on Cluster Munitions obliges State Parties to ensure that destruction methods comply with applicable international standards for protecting public health and the environment.¹

International Standards

There are a number of standards available for the destruction of conventional ammunition stockpiles. The International Mine Action Standards contain a “Guide for the destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines” (IMAS 11.10), but as the title indicates, this refers to the destruction of anti-personnel mines only.

The NATO Standardization Agreement (STANAG) provides a number of standards related to conventional ammunition overall, for example on storage, transport, qualification for military use or whole life assessment. However, it does not provide cluster munitions specific information.

There is also a Handbook published by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) named “Best Practices on Conventional Ammunition”. It provides general guidance on the Destruction of Conventional Ammunition. Again, nothing in particular on cluster munitions.

In addition, countries have their own national laws and regulations relevant to cluster munition stockpile destruction to protect human health, for example on accident prevention, worksite safety, transport, explosive handling, weapon’s control, foreign trade, and demilitarisation.²

Environmental Standards

There are internationally accepted standards for the determination and measurement of air pollution from industrial processes, which also apply to cluster munition stockpile destruction. However, these standards only apply to the measurement of emissions, as they do not provide guidance on what the overall emission limits should be: this remains the responsibility of the national authority.

¹ Article 3, paragraph 2: “... Each State Party undertakes to ensure that destruction methods comply with applicable international standards for protecting public health and the environment.”

² The latter says for example in some countries that ammunition which is collectively secured, such as cluster munitions, must not be manually reverse assembled.

The only supra-national legislation that covers emissions into the atmosphere from incineration of waste is Directive 2000/76/EC of the European Parliament and Council on the incineration of waste. It is relevant for the destruction of cluster munitions in the European Union and associated countries.

The Directive is aiming at environmental protection and human health by preventing or limiting negative effects on the environment from the incineration of waste, in particular pollution by emissions into air, soil, surface water and ground water. This aim shall be met by means of stringent operational conditions and technical requirements, through setting emission limit values, and by meeting the requirements of other Directives dealing with waste. The Directive also foresees control and monitoring, and it defines measurement requirements.

Conclusions

At this stage, there are no international standards specifically for cluster munitions stockpile destruction beyond what is set out in the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Work is in progress to make the IMAS CCM-coherent. There are however a number of related international, regional and of course national regulations which have to be applied, particularly when it comes to the protection of the environment and human health.