

Convention on Cluster Munitions

Third Meeting of States Parties

Opening Session

Oslo, Tuesday 11 September 2012

**Opening statement and script for Norwegian
Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Jonas Gahr
Støre, Moderator**

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Excellencies, friends and colleagues,

**Welcome to Oslo! And welcome to the opening
session of the Third Meeting of States
Parties to the Convention on Cluster
Munitions (CCM).**

**To many of you I - as a Norwegian Foreign
Minister - should of course say welcome back
to Oslo.**

Some of you were here in February 2007 when we had invited states, the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) to what was to become the launch of the Oslo Process, the series of meetings that culminated in Dublin in May 2008.

Even more of you were here for the Signing Conference in December 2008.

It is a pleasure to see all of you in my own city, at a time when the Convention has become an effective instrument of international humanitarian law.

So far 111 states have joined the Convention, and the number of ratifications continues to grow - we already have 75 States Parties.

Now, we see that it ensures concrete improvements on the ground. A process - from visions, ideas, words, texts - to action.

I would particularly like to welcome - and let me introduce my fellow panellists:

To my right, His Excellency, Dr. Adnan Mansour, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants of Lebanon and President of the Second Meeting of States Parties.

To my left, Ms. Christine Beerli, Vice-President of the ICRC.

To my far right, Mr. Neil Buhne, Director of the UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, Geneva Liaison Office.

And finally, to my far left, Mr. Branislav Kapetanovic, representing the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) .

At the Signing Conference in 2008, our strong and common message was the need to start

implementing the Convention as soon as possible.

Since then, we have seen major progress on the ground. Improved methods for clearing areas contaminated by cluster munition remnants have dramatically shortened the time it will take to make these areas safe again.

Even in the worst affected areas, our timeframe is now one or two decades rather than centuries. The majority of contaminated states can be cleared in less than five years, provided there are adequate resources and political will.

And stockpiles of cluster munitions are being destroyed faster and at less cost than anticipated.

Many compare the cluster munition problem of today with the landmine problem in the first years after the adoption of the Mine Ban Convention in 1997. Fortunately, the situations are different because we were able

to stop the use of cluster munitions before the problem became as great as that of landmines.

Clearing areas contaminated by cluster munitions and destroying stockpiles is a smaller challenge than the landmine problem was and in many respects still is. We can tackle a substantial part of the cluster munition problem over the next 10 years - if we want to.

However, the Convention on Cluster Munitions is not just about destroying the lethal munitions. It is about people, their lives and livelihoods, their stories.

Far too many have paid the price these weapons entail. And many have to pay this price every day, for the rest of their lives. The timeframe for these victims is an entire lifespan, not just a matter of years.

The Convention has become a benchmark because it places these victims at the centre.

Nevertheless, we know that more needs to be done. The Government has in a proposal to the Norwegian Parliament suggested Norwegian ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

As I said, the Convention on Cluster Munitions is a key instrument for protecting civilians. It has effectively stopped the use of cluster munitions before they became widely used. And as my friends here on the podium can testify, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

We have, as you know, seen isolated instances of the use of cluster munitions since the Convention was adopted, but a very clear pattern is emerging:

These weapons have been stigmatised.

No responsible state, whether party or non-party to the Convention, wants to be associated with the use of cluster munitions. The political cost is simply too high.

Therefore, friends and colleagues, our Convention is working.

The market for cluster munitions has practically disappeared.

The use has virtually stopped.

These weapons are universally considered to be unacceptable.

The Convention has also strengthened the international normative framework protecting civilians.

To further support this process, we have distributed a background paper on the relationship between the CCM and

international humanitarian law. And we have invited you all to address some of these issues during the general exchange of views later today.

We talk about the Oslo Process, and many have attributed the Convention's inception to Norway. Well, while I appreciate that, let there be no doubt that the Convention was brought about by decades of tireless efforts by dedicated men and women from all over the world, in states, in NGOs (like the Norwegian People's Aid; in 2012 they mark 20 years of mine action), the ICRC and the UN.

The Oslo Process was a catalyst. It spurred a concerted and targeted effort by a broad range of actors and a unique partnership. These efforts enabled us to meet clearly defined common goals.

I would like to acknowledge the particularly close and fruitful cooperation Norway, as

President-Designate, has had with the outgoing President, Lebanon.

Let me assure you that Norway will do its utmost to follow in Lebanon's footsteps and build upon the progress achieved during its Presidency.

I am also very pleased that Zambia has offered to host the next Meeting of States Parties, and that the Zambian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Given Lubinda (together with other members of the Zambian government), has come to Oslo to present the country's candidature.

It is the states that conclude treaties and bear the legal responsibility for implementing them. But we would not have got anywhere without the dynamic interaction we have had with the ICRC, the United Nations and the Cluster Munition Coalition.

The successes of first the Mine Ban Convention and then the CCM clearly

demonstrate that this partnership model is effective and efficient.

This is exactly the route we need to take – by common efforts – if we are to ensure continued progress in the areas of protection of civilians in armed conflict and disarmament. Let us keep on working together – in partnerships – to tackle new challenges as they arise.

Excellencies, friends and colleagues, I wish you all the best for the Third Meeting of States Parties, and I look forward to seeing you all again when we reach the next milestone.

(Thank you) .

And now, it is my pleasure to introduce the next speaker, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants Dr. Adnan Mansour of Lebanon,

President of the Second Meeting of States Parties.

Minister Mansour represents a country that has painful experience of being affected by cluster munitions - and a country that has used this experience in its national and international efforts, taking a leading role in our joint efforts to rid the world of this weapon.

Dear colleague, the floor is yours.

[LEBANON'S MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND EMIGRANTS DR. ADNAN MANSOUR SPEAKS]

Thank you for those words.

Our next speaker represents one of our most important partners.

The International Committee of the Red Cross not only functions as the guardian of

international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions, but as a major provider of humanitarian assistance it uses its field experience to work with states and other partners to uphold and strengthen the protection of civilians, both in conflict situations and outside them.

Ms. Christine Beerli, Vice-President of the ICRC, I am honoured to give you the floor.

[ICRC's VICE-PRESIDENT MS CHRISTINE BEERLI SPEAKS]

Thank you for sharing the ICRC's thoughts on the role of the Convention on Cluster Munitions in international law and in humanitarian work. Let us continue to work together to strengthen the protection of civilians.

Prevention and recovery in practice is at the heart of our next speaker's mandate. As

Director of UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR), Geneva Liaison Office, Mr. Neil Buhne represents an organisation that combines policy work with practical programming in the field.

I am grateful that you are with us today. The floor is yours.

[UNDP BCPR's MR. NEIL BUHNE SPEAKS]

Thank you for demonstrating how efforts to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions enhance the protection of civilians.

Norway looks forward to working closely with UNDP and other partners to build on this knowledge as we continue our efforts and tackle new challenges together.

The final speaker in today's opening session is a strong personality known to many in this room. Having been severely injured himself,

while clearing cluster munition remnants, Mr Branislav Kapetanovic has for years been an active and effective proponent of, and spokesperson for, the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Now representing the Cluster Munition Coalition, the coalition of civil society organisations that, more than anyone, can take credit for the existence of the Convention – I am proud and honoured to welcome you today and we look forward to benefitting from your experience. Mr Branislav Kapetanovic, you have the floor.

[CMC'S REPRESENTATIVE MR BRANISLAV KAPETANOVIC SPEAKS]

Thank you. Again, I am grateful that you could be here today and remind us all of the realities and how they need to be addressed.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, this concludes the opening session of the Third Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

I will now ask my colleague, Dr Adnan Mansour, the President of the Second Meeting of States Parties, to continue with the official opening of the meeting. Please stay seated while the next session is set up.

I wish you all a successful meeting. And I wish us all success in our joint effort to rid the world of cluster munitions.

Thank you.