

Third Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions Intervention by the Czech Republic

Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your election and to express a deep gratitude of my delegation to the Government of Norway for bringing the Third Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions back to its very beginning, rooted here, in the beautiful city of Oslo: Many thanks you for hosting this noble gathering! I would also like to assure you of the readiness of my delegation to do its utmost for reaching a successful outcome of this meeting. The Czech Republic fully associates itself with the statement made earlier by the European Union, which enables me to add only a few points from the national perspective.

The Czech Republic, having been among the initial signatories, ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions last summer. The instrument of ratification was deposited with the UN Secretary General during the Treaty Event on 22nd September 2011 and the Convention entered into force for my country on 1st March 2012. Therefore, this Meeting represents for the Czech Republic the first one where it takes part as a State Party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. As such, my country fulfilled, in time, an obligation stemming from the Convention to put forward its initial report. For the sake of domestic implementation, in order to impose the obligations under the Convention on Cluster Munitions on natural and legal persons, the Czech Republic's constitution system required the adoption of a special law.

That Law, No. 213 of 2011, On the Prohibition of the Use, Development, Production and Transfer of Cluster Munitions and their Destruction, was prepared already in 2010, its effect pending the entry into force of the Convention, i.e. 1st March 2012. The Law includes the prohibitions contained in the Convention on Cluster Munitions and applies to both individuals and corporations. It does not include penal sanctions for violations, whereas respective provisions of the general Criminal Code of the Czech Republic apply. Under another domestic Law, On the Development, Production and Possession of Prohibited Means of Combat, it is classified as a criminal offence "to develop, produce, import, export, store, or accumulate weapons or means of combat prohibited by law or international treaty, or to dispose of these weapons or means of combat". Penal sanctions for violations related to prohibited weapons include imprisonment from one to five years as well as financial sanctions for violations by corporations amounting up to CZK 50 million.

The Czech Republic has never used cluster munitions in any military operation. Moreover, it removed all existing stockpiles of cluster munitions from Army weaponry by the year 2006. In the period 2004 – 2010, all cluster munitions, which represented more than 400 pieces of cluster munitions and approx. 15 thousands of explosive submunitions, were gradually destroyed in an environment friendly manner. That was done partially at military installations by the Army itself, partially in civilian specialized facilities on a commercial basis. The Czech Republic managed this process on its own and did not require any international assistance. Currently, the Czech Republic retains only explosive submunitions with no air or surface-fired means of delivery. At the end of 2010, their number was 796. By mid-2012, this number decreased to 461, those more than 300 less of explosive submunitions having been used strictly for training purposes of Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) specialists.

Mr. President,

My country has always been actively supporting the main goals of the Convention: prohibition of use, production, stockpiling and transfer of the cluster munitions, clearance of contaminated land, destruction of stockpiles and victims assistance. We fully subscribe to the Vientiane Action Plan adopted in December 2010 and we stand ready to support its effective implementation.

We also welcome a significant progress in the universalisation of the Convention that has been achieved since the Second Meeting of the States Parties. I would like to assure you that the Czech Republic as a State Party will take every opportunity, in bilateral meetings and multilateral forums at all levels, to promote the Convention and to encourage those States not yet Parties to accede to it.

Thank you, Mr. President.