

Statement by South Africa at the 3rd Meeting of State Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), Oslo, Norway

(Check against delivery)

Thank you, Mr President.

At the outset, my delegation wishes to congratulate you on assuming the Presidency of this Third Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). We wish to express our gratitude to the Norwegian Government for the excellent arrangements in hosting this meeting and for the warm hospitality extended to my delegation in this beautiful city of Oslo.

Mr President,

The CCM represents an important milestone in the development of international humanitarian law. We therefore wish to acknowledge the important role played by our host, Norway, in the adoption of the CCM and in its implementation. Much has been achieved since we gathered here almost four years ago during the historic signing of the Convention. However, if our aim of a world free from cluster munitions is to be realised we recognise that much remains to be done.

As a former producer of cluster munitions that have an area wide effect, we believe that these weapons have not only become obsolete as weapons of modern warfare, but that their use in conflicts have consistently shown them to cause unacceptable harm to civilians, even long after the cessation of active hostilities.

Mr President,

Africa has been ravaged by wars, often fuelled by illicit weapons produced elsewhere in the world. It is for this reason that the CCM has specific relevance for our Continent. We welcome the significant support that the CCM has received to date and the fact that it has already been endorsed by the vast majority of African States. In this regard, we recall the Accra Regional Conference on the Universalisation of the CCM that took place in May this year. Under the Accra Universalisation Action Plan all participating States committed to take all necessary steps to ratify the CCM as soon as possible. We therefore welcome the progress that has been made through the increased number of African ratifications since the entry into force of the CCM.

With regard to South Africa's own ratification process, I can report that further steps have been taken, in accordance with our constitutional requirements and procedures, to obtain parliamentary approval for the ratification of the Convention. This process is ongoing and should be finalised in the near future. Beyond our own Continent, we welcome the steady progress that has been made towards increasing the number of ratifications.

Mr President,

In our efforts to implement the Convention, we need to ensure that a practical difference is made on the ground. Firstly, we need to place emphasis on assisting victims and survivors. Secondly, efforts should be made to clear all contaminated areas as this hampers economic development and poses an unacceptable risk to civilians. Thirdly, existing cluster munitions stockpiles should be destroyed as soon as possible, consistent with the requirements of the Convention. Last but not least, we need to recognise that the implementation of the Convention largely depends on the capacity of the affected States. Accordingly, international cooperation and assistance is critical to achieve the full and effective implementation of the Convention. We therefore thank those that have already provided assistance to affected States and call on all those that are in a position to do so to offer assistance. In this regard, we wish to emphasise that effective international cooperation and assistance may also serve as an incentive for those who are still considering joining the Convention.

Mr President,

Let me recall the comments made by our Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Ms Maite Nkoana-Mashabane during the Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt in May this year where she emphasised that South Africa continues to favour a multilateral approach to issues of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. She noted that solutions based on the commitment of the international community as a whole offer the most viable and sustainable methods of limiting, preventing and eliminating the threats posed by the proliferation of both conventional arms and weapons of mass destruction. It is in this context, that we remain concerned about those who have not yet joined the Convention, particularly the largest users and producers of cluster munitions. Accordingly, we need to redouble our efforts to convince these States to accede to the Convention as soon as possible.

Mr President,

South Africa will continue to play an active role in partnership with other States and members of civil society towards the establishment of a truly cluster munitions free world through strengthening the norms established by the CCM as a landmark in humanitarian disarmament.

Lastly, Mr President, allow me to welcome and thank the Government of Zambia for its offer to host the 4th Meeting of State Parties.

I thank you.