

Statement by Minister Micheál Martin at Closing Ceremony

Dublin Diplomatic Conference on Cluster Munitions

30 May 2008

President,
Distinguished Colleagues,

You came to Dublin. You knew what had to be done – and you did it!

It is a credit to the bold constructive spirit which has prevailed throughout the Conference that this far-reaching and comprehensive text has been adopted today by consensus.

Rarely if ever in international diplomacy have we seen such single-minded determination to conclude a convention with such high humanitarian goals in such a concentrated period of time

I want to pay tribute to all present here for the efforts all of you have made. And I hope I can be forgiven for saying that I am particularly proud of the central role played by Ambassador O' Ceallaigh and his team, drawn from my own Department of Foreign Affairs and our Defence Forces. I am also glad that students from some of our universities have been involved.

It is clear that despite individual national circumstances and perspectives, all of you were able to agree that collectively you gained more than you gave up in the final outcome. That is the essence of any successful negotiation. This was not a zero-sum game, where one side's win inevitably meant another side's loss. That may be the usual situation here in Croke Park. On this occasion, I think it is fair to say, we are all winners.

The Convention is strong and ambitious. Its ban on cluster munitions is comprehensive. It sets new standards for assistance to victims and for clearing affected areas. And even though we all know that there are important states not

present, I am also convinced that together we will have succeeded in stigmatising any future use of cluster munitions.

When we embarked upon this voyage, only fifteen months ago in Oslo, we knew that we required a clear vision, and the determination to maintain the pace and focus on our goal. The work since then has been based on an exemplary partnership between States and civil society, with the UN family of agencies and the International Committee of the Red Cross bringing their particular expertise to bear. We have more than met the high level of ambition enjoined on us by the UN Secretary-General in his opening day message to us.

I would also like to pay tribute here to the Cluster Munitions Coalition for their tireless lobbying and informed advocacy. And I thank in particular the victims of cluster munitions for constantly reminding us of the broader humanitarian context of our negotiations. They have shown immense fortitude in coping with the pain and suffering which cluster munitions have brought to their lives. They have risen above their personal circumstances to campaign to prevent future victims.

It is a great pleasure for me to acknowledge the wisdom and partnership of our friends in the Core Group, and I salute the inspirational leadership role of Norway in this process. I am happy that the Convention on Cluster Munitions will be opened for signature at a ceremony to be hosted by the Government of Norway in Oslo in December.

It is now time to focus on the future. I suggest that we set ourselves three immediate goals. First, we need to do all that is necessary nationally to allow us to ratify the Convention as soon as possible after signature. For the Irish Government, the preparation of the required domestic legislation has already begun. Once it has been drafted, its enactment will be a priority. I intend to introduce a Bill during the autumn session of the Dáil.

The second goal must be to ensure the greatest possible number of accessions to the Convention. We want ultimately to see it ratified by all Member States of the United

Nations. We should work together to explain and argue for its provisions with those who are not here.

Third, we all need to plan to do what is necessary to implement the Convention in full, not least in regard to victim assistance and clearance.

The new Convention has had the best possible start towards universalisation and effective implementation. The spirit in evidence over the past two weeks will launch us on the next phase, to give effect to our words. I am convinced that together we can do this.

Soon nearly all of you will leave Dublin to return home. I hope that you will remember your two weeks here positively, and that above all you feel a real and abiding sense of accomplishment. Your achievement will be reflected not just in the Articles of the Convention but in the lives of those saved from the scourge of cluster munitions.

Thank you all.