



Opening Statement

6TH Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions

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Dear Delegates,

Stopping the use of cluster munitions everywhere and forever is urgent.

Why? This very year the tragic effects of new cluster bomb use are being experienced in Syria and Yemen. Refugees in their thousands are fleeing these zones of terror and the consequences of this flight reverberate around the globe. Children, women and men are killed or maimed and traumatized. Land is made unsafe for years. Human security does not exist as people live in fear of the next strike.

Last week, in Cambodia, I was with a woman who fled with her children from Syria after both her parents were killed by the strikes. When she was driven to the Angkor temples, she trembled as she passed the cluster bombs outside the museum. It is outrageous that the use of cluster munitions continues in 2016. The media has covered this extensively and many States Parties, the CMC and others have been forthright in their condemnation.

The long term consequences of cluster munitions dropped forty years ago still affect South East Asia. Now with tension rising in the South China Sea the possibility of future cluster bomb use cannot be discounted. There are plenty of stockpiles available.

This year is the tenth anniversary of the strikes in Lebanon which stirred us to urgent action for our Convention.

Stopping the use of cluster munitions forever is a major ethical decision that all governments need to take. The 119 countries that are States Parties or Signatories to the Convention on Cluster Munition have taken this decision. The CMC urges the nineteen countries who still need to ratify to do so within the year.

In December 2015 32 non-signatories voted in favour of the first ever United Nations General Assembly resolution on the Convention on Cluster Munitions. All States Parties are urged to seek out these non-signatories and strongly encourage them to join the moral community and legal framework that makes these weapons something of our regrettable past.

The destruction of stockpiles -172.9 million of them- is a sign of the strength of the treaty. The news that the last remaining company manufacturing cluster bombs in the USA has ceased production is welcome. Sub Saharan Africa leaders have committed to a cluster munitions free region as have Latin America and the Caribbean. May this regional solidarity be imitated.

Sadly Asia and the Middle East are the most contaminated places on earth and also the areas with very few Convention members. Laos, Japan and Afghanistan lead the way in Asia and Lebanon and Iraq in the Middle East. We eagerly await good news from other countries. The time for excuses is over.

Cluster Munitions must be outlawed and transgressors (State or non-State) who use them shamed by international outrage and stigmatization. Any political declaration agreed this week must build on the Dubrovnik declaration and condemn any use of cluster munitions by any actor.

The pained eyes of children, women and men, victims of new cluster bomb use, must no longer condemn our inhumanity. Universalization is urgent if we truly want to stem refugee flows. Clearance is urgent to make land safe and available for economic and social growth. Addressing the rights and meeting the needs of victims, enhancing their quality of life is essential for a humane society. Destroying stockpiles is urgent to prevent future catastrophes. Let this urgency be the tone of our work together this week.