

Convention on Cluster Munitions
First Review Conference, Dubrovnik 7-11 September 2015
General Exchange of Views

Statement by
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Mr. President, Excellencies, dear Colleagues,

At the outset, allow me to warmly congratulate you, Mr. President, for chairing this meeting and thank you and your team for the excellent preparation of this important conference. Let me assure you of the full support of my delegation in the conduct of this meeting. We thank Croatia for the warm and perfect hospitality. It is very fitting that this Conference is being held here in beautiful Dubrovnik. Croatia was not only among the lead countries that gave birth to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Croatia has been one of its champions throughout. Having been the target of cluster munition strikes itself, Croatia has rendered significant input and has been sharing valuable experience with the Convention's community. To pick just one example: as regards the strengthening of victim assistance, Croatia has been leading in efforts to raise the awareness and adequately respond to the psychological and psycho-social needs of survivors, affected families and communities. My delegation would also like to express its appreciation to the outgoing Presidency of Costa Rica for their outstanding efforts in advancing the aims of the Convention.

Mr. President,

Austria has for a long time been endeavouring to promote the observance and evolution of international humanitarian law. So we are with so many other states proud today to celebrate five years since entry into force of this international humanitarian treaty. Alas, it is a cruel reality that even a few days ahead of this Conference, we had to learn about death and human suffering of civilians, men, women and children, resulting from the use of cluster munitions. Austria reiterates its strong condemnation of any use of cluster munitions by any actor, which we consider a key message to be reflected in the Dubrovnik Declaration that has been skilfully elaborated under the leadership of Mrs Dijana Plestina. We wholeheartedly subscribe to strong humanitarian messages in the Dubrovnik Declaration, a clear expression of the global stigmatization of cluster munitions due to their inherently indiscriminate and inhumane nature and of the determination of the international community to put an end to the suffering caused by cluster munitions. Austria happily joins the Dubrovnik Declaration and hopes that as many delegations as possible will state their support for this text.

The norm of the CCM is being strengthened day by day. This is manifested also in the accelerated universalization of the Treaty. Austria warmly welcomes all States that have joined the CCM since the last meeting of States Parties and commend all actors that have been engaged in this process. We need to maintain our strong focus on universalization as reflected in the Dubrovnik Action Plan to be adopted this week in order to ensure that the objective of the Convention will be met.

Sharing of experiences, resources and capacities is a fundamental aspect of the success of our Treaty. In its capacity as co-coordinator, Austria has been honoured to contribute to framing the way forward on cooperation and assistance for the next five years. The Dubrovnik Action Plan is based on the right of States Parties to seek and receive cooperation and assistance and aims at improving the level and quality of information about needs of states, at strengthening national ownership and partnerships at all levels between all relevant actors, and, where feasible, long-term sustainability of such partnerships. It also aims at promoting cost-effective, innovative and promising practices on technical, material and financial assistance. We are confident that this will put us on the right track.

Impressive results have been achieved in stockpile destruction. Many countries concerned completed or have announced to complete destruction well within or even ahead of their deadlines. This is a very encouraging trend. These states have gained valuable experience and good practices on how to destroy stockpiles in an expeditious, safe and cost-efficient manner.

The Convention calls for the full realization of the rights of all cluster munition victims as one of the Treaty obligations. Recent years have brought an understanding of the need to anchor victim assistance more thoroughly into national development and disability-related policies, strategies and plans. We need to make sure that this is reflected both at the country level of States with victims, and also in the development and disability strategies and policies of potential donor States. Only by monitoring and assessing the process of integration of victim assistance into broader policy frameworks in a measurable way, we can ensure that requirements of survivors, affected families and communities will be met in accordance with our Treaty obligations. We commend the work undertaken by survivors and their organisations to support the implementation of the victim assistance obligations. Their participation in all related decision-making and implementation processes is crucial.

We warmly welcome Mrs. Sheila Mweemba as Director of the ISU and we would like to assure her of our full support. In Beirut back in 2011 States Parties agreed that the ISU is essential to assist them in the implementation of their commitments. Hence flows our responsibility to make the ISU functioning on a basis of sustainability, predictability and collective ownership. The documents to be adopted this week set out an ambitious agenda for the next five years. With this in view, it is indispensable that the ISU will be provided with adequate and reliable funding in the future. As we know, voluntary contributions are not a reliable source.

What kind of machinery is needed in order to effectively implement the Convention at this stage? In the view of my delegation, the coordination committee with thematic coordinators in support of the Presidency has served us well and helped to increase ownership. Regarding the sequence of meetings, most important to us seems to be that we keep momentum and ensure decision-making capacity on an annual basis, through annual meetings of States parties. We further believe that intersessional meetings could well be replaced by other activities on a regional, cross-regional or Geneva level that are more focussed towards concrete objectives, e.g. on implementation or universalization challenges.

Mr President,

Austria is glad to have contributed to the funding of participants in this conference. In conclusion let me express our expectation that this Review Conference will bring the success story of the Cluster Munitions Convention to a higher level. Thank you.