

First Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions

Statement by Canada

Mr. President, Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Canadian delegation, I would like to express our appreciation to the Government of Croatia for warmly welcoming us to Dubrovnik and to you and your team, Mr. President, for the manner in which you've prepared the work of this first Review Conference.

Additionally, I would like to thank the outgoing Presidency, Costa Rica, for its efforts in support of this Convention over the past year, including promotion of its universalization.

It is fitting that we are gathering here in Croatia, an early proponent of the Convention and a country affected by cluster munitions with a strong commitment to mine action.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions represents a major advancement of international humanitarian law, and, in particular, a significant development in the protection of civilians from the effects of armed conflict. It builds upon the strong tradition of other IHL instruments that address the humanitarian impact of the use of mines and explosive weapons, notably the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention and Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

Mr. President,

Canada ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions on March 16, 2015. We are very pleased to be participating in this Review Conference as a State Party. Canada is firmly committed to the Convention's goal of putting an end for all time to the human suffering and casualties caused by cluster munitions.

To demonstrate that commitment, Canada destroyed all of its stockpiles of cluster munitions before it became a State Party and has not retained any cluster munitions for purposes permitted by the Convention. We urge all signatories and States Parties that have not already done so to follow suit. Indeed stockpile destruction has been one the early success stories of this Convention and we must keep up the momentum.

Over the last ten years, Canada has contributed more than \$230 M to address the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions and anti-personnel mines. Additionally, Canada has submitted voluntary reports on its implementation of the Convention every year since Article 7 reporting began, and will submit its initial report as a State Party in February of next year.

Mr. President,

For Canada, it is very important that the language in the outcome documents reflect, and not run counter, to the intent and text of the Convention. It is for this reason that we engaged on multiple occasions in Geneva and here in Dubrovnik in discussing the text of the Political Declaration and the Dubrovnik Action Plan in an open and transparent manner.

Canada is concerned that consensus language from previous outcome documents has been abandoned in favour of new language in paragraph 6 of the Political Declaration condemning any use of cluster munitions by any actor, which poses problems for States Parties who undertake military cooperation and operations with non-Parties, which the Convention permits us to do as per Article 21.

We regret that we were unable to find consensus language at this time that would have allowed us to adopt the Political Declaration by acclamation.

Mr. President,

This Review Conference represents an important opportunity to take stock of the successes that we have achieved collectively in the early life of this Convention. We must also take decisions on a programme of meetings for the next five years.

Canada considers that annual Meetings of States Parties are necessary in order to fulfill our mandate. We risk jeopardizing the momentum of implementation if we decrease the frequency of these meetings at this early stage.

We are open to seeing a continuation of inter-sessional work, provided that the mandate for these meetings is distinct from that of meetings of States Parties and that we continue to take advantage of synergies with sister Conventions.

Mr. President,

In addition to the successes on stockpile destruction that I mentioned earlier, there are other accomplishments that we can be proud to celebrate. States Parties with cluster munitions contamination are actively working to clear land, protect communities from threats posed and provide assistance to cluster munitions victims. Central America became the first sub-region free of cluster munitions and we hope that there will be many more to come.

While welcoming the progress to date, we must not lose sight of the challenges that remain. It is disturbing to hear reports of continued use of cluster munitions in contravention of international humanitarian law. We urge all actors to abide by their legal obligations. It also underlines the need for all States to become a party to the Convention to end for all time the human suffering and casualties caused by cluster munitions.

Though almost 100 States have now joined the treaty, we have a ways to go to achieve universality, and we must redouble our efforts in that regard. The true test of this Convention lies in its universalization, which will realise the ultimate goals of this landmark instrument.