

**Statement by Ms. Jasna Ognjanovac,  
Head of Delegation of the Republic of Croatia,  
Assistant Minister for Multilateral and Global Affairs, at the  
First Review Conference to the Convention on Cluster Munitions**

**Dubrovnik, 7 September 2015**

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to welcome you to Croatia on behalf of the Croatian Delegation.

Croatia is proud to host and to preside over the First Review Conference, whose aim is to reflect on the many achievements of this young Convention and to set ambitious goals for the future.

At the outset, I would like to thank Costa Rica, and other former presidents of Meetings of States Parties, for their hard work that has brought us to the First Review Conference. We also appreciate the valuable contributions to the goals of the Convention made by all States Parties, the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Cluster Munition Coalition and other international, regional and national organisations and institutions, gathered here today. We are particularly happy to see among us States present as signatories, as well as non-signatory States that attend as observers.

We welcome Ms. Sheila Mweemba, Director of the ISU, and congratulate her for being elected for this post. Special thanks go to the UNDP as Interim ISU for all their support to Croatia as the President-designate and for their assistance in coordination of the issues contained in the documents we have before us.

Mr. President,

Croatia has first-hand experience with cluster munitions, having been a target of cluster munitions strikes in our recent history. This experience prompted us to be among the first countries of the Southeast Europe to speak up about the dire humanitarian consequences of cluster munitions.

Since the beginning of the Convention, Croatia has been actively engaged in the area of global humanitarian disarmament, and especially in the field of the prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling and use of cluster munitions, as well as anti-personnel mines.

We are proud that the first talks among civil society organisations about a future cluster munitions convention took place on the margins of the Sixth Meeting of the States Parties of the Anti-Personnel Mines Convention, held in Zagreb in 2005.

After having been among the first countries to sign and ratify the Cluster Munitions Convention, together with partners Croatia coordinated the working groups on victim assistance and cluster munitions clearance.

Mr. President,

Cluster munitions have indiscriminate and inhuman effects. When used, they unselectively harm and maim people in a vast geographic area. At the same time, unexploded sub-munitions, which can remain in the ground for decades after their use, pose a continuing threat to civilians and livestock. This is how they obstruct economic and social development and impede post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions has a noble goal of putting an end for all time to the suffering of civilians caused by cluster munitions at the time of their use, when they fail to function and when they are abandoned.

The importance of the Convention is twofold. Firstly, it focuses on people, and not weapons. Its humanitarian character is the basis for assisting victims and their families, as well as for clearing contaminated land and destroying cluster munitions remnants. With its humanitarian and security aspects, the Convention represents one of the key instruments of global disarmament and international humanitarian law.

The second noteworthy aspect of the Convention is the important role of civil society groups engaged in victim assistance.

Mr. President,

We believe that it is important to encourage all states, and particularly those affected, to join the Convention as soon as possible. In these efforts, the best argument is to demonstrate that the Convention provides an effective framework for action to address a full range of problems and harms caused by cluster munitions. Thus, the most important message to convey to potential new states parties is that the Convention truly works.

We are happy to see that nine states joined the Convention since the Fifth Meeting of States Parties and this gives us a sense of optimism.

Mr. President,

Destruction of stockpiled cluster munitions is an issue that clearly showcases the effectiveness of the Convention and builds confidence that it is being fully implemented. Croatia is committed to completing the destruction of its stocks within the set deadline. In April and May this year more than 600 pieces of cluster munitions were successfully destroyed through industrial demilitarization techniques. The destruction of the remaining stockpiles continues as planned with the aim of completion before the set deadline.

Clearance of cluster munitions contaminated land is of the utmost importance to enhance human security in affected areas, building confidence and trust in a safer environment, and a more stable future. Croatia has invested tremendous effort in clearance and destruction of cluster munition remnants.

In the process of demining, we have also developed our own human resources and technological capacities, such as special purpose robotic systems to protect human lives in the most dangerous environments. Following successful cooperation with several states parties, Croatia would be happy to share its experience and know-how with all other interested partners, who are in the process of clearance and destruction.

Croatia believes that the sustainability of victim assistance in the long term requires these efforts to be integrated into a broader policy towards disabled people. In this regard we would like to highlight that Croatia has recently prepared a new Mine Action Act that emphasises the importance of assistance to victims, their socio-economic rehabilitation and integration. It introduces an obligation of running a data base on victims and their family members with the aim of providing systematic assistance adapted to age and gender. This assistance includes medical care, rehabilitation and psychological support, which will endeavour to secure their social and economic inclusion.

Mr. President,

Let me conclude by pledging the commitment of the Croatian Delegation to the successful outcome of the First Review Conference. We fully support political commitment of the Dubrovnik Declaration and believe that Dubrovnik Action Plan is a valuable tool for the further strengthening of the Convention. We stand ready to work closely with all partners in strengthening the Convention and ensuring its effective implementation in years to come.

Thank you.