

Mr. President, Excellencies, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

I am honored and pleased to be with you in the historical and beautiful city of Dubrovnik. Let me first thank our host Croatia for your hospitality and your efforts so far to make this Conference to a success. Let me assure you that you can count on the full support of my delegation.

Let me also use this opportunity to thank the outgoing Presidency of Costa Rica for all the important work they have done to promote this Convention over the last year.

And I am also pleased to again welcome Sheila Mweemba as the director of the ISU, whose mandate will officially start this week. But that goes not without also thanking Sara Sekkenes and Estelle Aebersold of the interim ISU/UNDP for all of their excellent work for this convention over the past years.

I think Dubrovnik is well suited for hosting the first Review Conference of the Cluster Munitions Convention. When reading about its history, the city of Ragusa, as Dubrovnik used to be called, was widely known for its excellent diplomatic skills. In the centuries that city states and big empires tried to rule this part of the world, Ragusa or Dubrovnik always managed to keep its independence and followed its own path - which brought prosperity and was a source of inspiration for others.

In my view, this is exactly the spirit we need for the CCM. Our main aim should be to use diplomacy to convince others that cluster munitions should become a thing of the past.

That it is not acceptable to use cluster munitions any more as they cause unacceptable human harm to the civilian population, in particular women and children.

That it is not acceptable to use cluster munitions any more as they obstruct economic and social development.

And most importantly that we make real progress towards ending the suffering and casualties caused by cluster munitions.

That is exactly the reason why we took the decision to outlaw them, now 5 years ago.

With the Convention on Cluster Munitions we have established a firm norm of non-use, which is strongly supported by my country.

We are therefore deeply concerned about attempts by some delegations to temper with this norm and water it down in the run up to this Conference.

We strongly believe it should be our concerted effort to promote this norm and not to dilute it or make exceptions.

Reinvigorating a firm norm is the more urgent as we continue to see cases of non-compliance and use of cluster munitions against civilian population.

In this regard we remain deeply concerned about the alleged use of cluster munitions in Yemen, Ukraine, Libya and Sudan. We call upon the governments concerned to react to these allegations in a concrete, open and transparent manner and to take any necessary measure to protect citizens from cluster munitions.

We continue to be appalled by the continued use of cluster munition and barrel bombs in populated areas by the Syrian regime. These attacks are contrary to international humanitarian law and the norms set by this convention. We call upon the Syrian regime

to immediately stop the further use of cluster munitions, and to comply strictly with all its obligations under international humanitarian law.

This convention is one of the success stories in disarmament. We firmly believe that our conference in Dubrovnik should highlight the achievements so far and give a further push to the further universalisation and implementation of this convention.

Many goals have been reached in only five years' time. We now have 97 States that have ratified the treaty. The destruction of stockpiles of cluster munitions in many countries is completed or well underway. We have also made good progress with regard to the Clearance of cluster munitions.

But there is more work to do. For us, three remaining challenges in particular stand out: 1) we need to do more to make this treaty universal; 2) we need to strengthen the norm against the use of cluster munitions; and 3) we need to improve our cooperation and assistance mechanism.

To overcome these challenges we need commitment, ambition and perseverance.

The Political Declaration and the Action Plan we are about to adopt this week address these issues in a comprehensive way and provide us with a good way forward for the next 5 years.

Regarding the programme of meetings and machinery the Netherlands is of the opinion that its efficiency and effectiveness could be further enhanced by shorter and less meetings.

Last but not least, let me address the financial model for the ISU. Now we have a director in place, the discussion on the financial model is no longer a discussion about something in the future. We need a solution now.

If we want to have a successful convention, finances do matter. Let us not shy away from that, we have to put our money where our mouth is. If we consider the elimination of cluster munition important, we should all be ready to pay for it. It is not the amount that matters, but it is the willingness and the gesture. The ISU should be a part of us all.

We therefore appeal to all delegations to contribute and to be flexible and to work constructively towards a solution that we can all live with.

For the Netherlands I am happy to announce today that we will make available 50.000 euros per year for the ISU over the next 5 years, amounting to 250.000 euros in total.