

UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT - OPENING STATEMENT

Mr President,

I would first like to thank the Government of Croatia for hosting this landmark Review Conference in its beautiful country. Like many others, we recognise the symbolic significance and appropriateness of meeting in Croatia - a country that has itself been subject to the effects of cluster munitions within living memory.

We also appreciate the hard work that has been put into the organisation of the Conference, including the preparation of papers. I would like specifically to recognize the unstinting efforts by UNDP and in particular Ms Sara Sekkenes our Executive Coordinator and her colleagues.

This is the first opportunity I have had in my personal capacity to welcome Ms. Sheila Mweemba as the Director of the Implementation Support Unit. I am delighted the ISU has managed to recruit such a well qualified head: the United Kingdom very much looks forward to working with you on the Convention.

This first Review Conference is a historic moment for the Convention, and the UK believes it is vital that we continue to keep political momentum strong, and continue to advance the Convention's goals.

The UK aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. Nationally, the United Kingdom is fully committed to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We are mindful of the suffering and casualties caused by cluster munitions both at the time of their use, and sometimes for decades thereafter. We are deeply concerned by the reports of Cluster Munitions use over the past year and call on the actors involved to cease using these weapons.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions has been a key international disarmament initiative in

prohibiting not only the use, production and transfer of cluster munitions, but also in requiring clearance operations, as well as promoting victim assistance.

The United Kingdom is proud to support the clearance of all unexploded ordinance including Cluster Munitions in developing countries. Our funding in this area from March 2014-2015 totalled some 8.4 million pounds (that is 12.2 million US dollars). Our assistance has benefitted seven countries in 2014-15 including Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Mozambique, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Iraq.

The United Kingdom wants to see the Convention become universal and takes opportunities in both bilateral discussions and multinational fora to encourage our allies, and others, to accede to the Convention. We are delighted to note that seven new States Parties have joined the Convention since the Fifth Meeting of States Parties, and welcome them to the Convention. Most recently, Foreign Office Minister Tobias Ellwood hosted a ministerial reception at Lancaster House, the Foreign Secretary's official residence in London. At that reception Minister Ellwood personally urged all states to accede to the Convention on Cluster Munitions and to attend this Conference. This event was attended by around 30 states, including a number of non-States Parties. We are delighted to note that seven new States Parties have joined the Convention since the Fifth Meeting of States Parties, and welcome them to the Convention.

Mr President, as I have already said, the United Kingdom remains fully committed to this valuable Convention, its aims and work. As you are aware, the United Kingdom completed the destruction of its stockpile of cluster munitions in December 2013, more than 5 years ahead of the schedule set by the Convention. In this clearance we achieved a recycling rate for components in excess of 90%. We would be pleased to share our experience with interested States and urge all States Parties with outstanding obligations under Article 3 to complete destruction as soon as possible.

I hope I have demonstrated the United Kingdom's full and continuing support for this Convention. Mr President, you have invited all States Parties present to support the Dubrovnik Declaration as it stands. While it includes very useful language on universalisation, clearance, stockpile destruction and victim assistance, the United Kingdom regrets it cannot support the current unqualified language condemning all use of cluster munitions by any actor, as that ignores the other provisions of the Convention such as Article 21– the so-called 'interoperability' clause. The UK is concerned that any text which undermines Article 21 may have the unintended effect of dissuading future States Parties from acceding to this Convention. For the United Kingdom, it is crucial that any document we agree here reflects the FULL text of the Convention – but I stress this should NOT be misinterpreted as an effort to 'water down' language – it is quite the contrary. Mr President, I would like to make clear that we remain ready and willing to continue constructive discussions to resolve this issue ASAP.

Finally, I would like to assure you again that the United Kingdom is, and will remain, committed to ALL aspects of the Convention and will continue to work to support this Convention as we move ahead after our First Review Conference.