

**Cluster Munition Coalition Statement – Opening Ceremony
Convention on Cluster Munitions 4th Meeting of the States Parties
Lusaka, 9 September 2013**



Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

As a cluster munition survivor and as a campaigner of the Cluster Munition Coalition, it is an honor for me to be given this opportunity to address the opening ceremony of the 4th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions here in Zambia.

My name is Aynelem, and I come from Ethiopia. I was only 6 years old on the 5th of June 1998, when my school was bombed. On that day, my younger brother, two of my sisters and I were all injured. On that day, I lost a limb. On that day, I did not realize I had actually lost a lot more.

Like many survivors, I had to go through various surgical interventions and needed time to recover. I spent more than five months in a rehabilitation center in Addis the hospital in Addis, away from school, from my friends and from my family. Like many child survivors, I had to regularly go to the hospital to check my prosthesis and change it as I was growing up. Luckily, there was a rehabilitation center in Mekele, but many survivors living in rural and remote areas do not have access to such services.

Like many survivors, I felt guilty for adding a burden to my family. I had lost my dad, and my mum had to raise us single-handedly. But it was only growing up that I realized what a struggle it really was for her. Therefore, like many survivors, I did my best and worked hard to earn a living. But numerous survivors do not have the chance to study or access to vocational training, and many of us still fight to properly earn a living.

While this is my personal story, I did not experience all this alone. I was accompanied along the way by my siblings, my community and my country, like all survivors.

One should indeed always keep in mind that the impact of cluster munitions goes way beyond the individual. It impacts the family and the community. It also impacts the land and the living environment of a whole population for years, even decades. Just take a look at the situation in

countries like Lao PDR, Iraq, and Afghanistan, or my own country where, nearby my school, cluster munitions remnants are still found 14 years after the strike.

I of course welcome all the progress made, and congratulate those states who decided to rid the world of these weapons by joining the convention. But while we are on the right path, we still have many steps to take.

As a survivor, I wish for no more victims. But it will prove impossible if stockpiles still exist around the world, if the land is not cleared and given back to its people so they can farm, build, invest and play. And it will prove impossible if cluster munitions keep being used like now in Syria, and if such use is not strongly condemned by the community of states.

I therefore call on States Parties to respect their obligations and to help each other in respecting them.

And I call on all states, especially those who are experiencing the devastating impacts of cluster bombs, to join the treaty as soon as possible.

I finally call on all of you to make sure that no more cluster bombs will be used, as protecting civilians is a duty states all have with no exceptions.

This is a wish, not a fantasy, and wishes can be granted if there is a strong and common will to do so. It is not just my wish, but one of all cluster munition victims - in Africa and around the world. You in this room have the power to grant this wish. Your energy, your commitment, your hard work will make it happen. We are counting on you.

I thank you for your attention.