



Statement by H.E. Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva at the
Second Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions
Review of the operation and status of the Convention and other matters important for achieving the aims of the Convention: Victims' assistance
Geneva, 26 November 2020

Mr. President,

There is no question that, since the Convention on Cluster Munitions entered into force, through the combined contributions and synergies between different stakeholders, it has achieved significant progress and has made a real difference, especially among the victims affected, as well as among those that it has helped prevent.

By placing the human person at the center, this Convention is clear proof of the inextricable link between disarmament and development. The equation is quite straightforward: the more we invest in disarmament, the less resources will we need for humanitarian assistance. In this regard, this Delegation also welcomes the focus on prevention and on peace and risk-education, which, after all, are indispensable tools.

Mr. President.

Indeed, the desire for peace, security and stability is one of the deepest longings of the human heart. It is also a legitimate concern to expect continually an adequate response that surpasses the mere military dimension.¹ The Holy See is very concerned that there has been an increase in civilian casualties and that cluster munitions continue to be used today.

The challenges in implementing the legal obligations contracted under the Convention have certainly been exacerbated by the ongoing pandemic, which will have, among others, long-term socio-economic effects in many regions, especially in developing countries. However, it is of paramount importance that the obligations contracted, especially in relation to victims' assistance, are not placed on hold.

There is no time to waste precisely because every person counts, and every victim counts. The strength of this Convention lies in the idea of partnership and cooperation², which should also respect the different values and cultures of affected populations. This is a shared responsibility. As a family of nations, which assumes the same objectives under this Convention, the delay and failure of one State Party is the failure of all. At the same time, the success of one is the success of all!

Mr. President,

In his most recent Encyclical Letter, entitled "Fratelli Tutti", Pope Francis decries the fact that the first victim of every conflict is "the human family's innate vocation to fraternity".³ Indeed, "every war leaves our world worse than it was before. War is a failure of politics and of humanity, a shameful capitulation, a stinging defeat before the forces of evil. Let us not remain

¹ Cf. Intervention of the Holy See at the Oslo Conference for the signing of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, 3 December 2008.

² Cf. Intervention of the Holy See at the first meeting of States Parties, Vientiane 2010.

³ Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter "Fratelli Tutti", par. 39.

mired in theoretical discussions, but touch the wounded flesh of the victims. Let us look once more at all those civilians whose killing was considered ‘collateral damage’. Let us ask the victims themselves... look at reality through their eyes, and listen with an open heart to the stories they tell. In this way, we will be able to grasp the abyss of evil at the heart of war. Nor will it trouble us to be deemed naive for choosing peace”.⁴

In this regard, it is important for States Parties to listen to the voice of the victims and to include them in the implementation of the Convention in a true spirit of fraternity and accountability. An important way to ensure that their needs are addressed properly and that their rights are upheld is to listen to the victims, in a full spirit of ownership and partnership.

Mr. President,

The Holy See remains hopeful that the States Parties to the Convention will carry out their responsibility - individually and collectively - in order to prevent cluster munitions from being a threat to the life and an obstacle for the integral development of the populations that have experienced and continue to experience conflicts.

Thank you, Mr. President.

⁴ *Ibid.* paragraph 261