



Kingdom of the Netherlands

Statement of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
at
Second Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions,
agenda item 8b. Storage and Stockpile Destruction

26 November 2020

By
H.E. Mr Robbert Jan Gabriëlse
Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the Conference on
Disarmament and Disarmament Ambassador at large

Mr. President,

Following our statement of last year's Meeting of States Parties I am pleased to inform you on the latest developments regarding the military owned stockpiles of cluster munitions in the Netherlands.

The Ministry of Defence has been challenged for a long time by shrinking budgets and enormous staff shortages, so the subject which is paramount in this conference was pushed into the background.

Destruction of cluster munitions has been revived within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, although the subject was comfortably resting and cluster munitions were safely stowed in our bunkers with no additional action foreseen at short notice.

The clarification request addressed to the Netherlands in January 2017 led to a series of actions within our Ministry of Defence, and also - quite important - was the allocation of a specified, however not unlimited budget, to combat direct costs on demilitarization of parts/units of cluster munitions within our stockpiles.

As we voiced, last year 200 projectiles 155 MM High Explosive M483-SER for Howitzer, containing 17.600 bomblets M42/M46 have been demilitarized / destroyed at NAMMO in Norway.

NAMMO is a certified demilitarization company with many nations as customer, so an excellent opportunity fit for purpose. Within the Netherlands, demilitarization at large scale is nearly impossible and detonation of large numbers of ammunition is restricted due to a complex national policy on environmental hygiene.

An additional contract was tendered to NAMMO to demilitarize additional parts of stockpiled cluster munition in order to lower the existing amount to the maximum. This resulted in the transport of 16 cluster bombs, 58 warheads and 175 bomblets in March this year; please note that winter conditions prevented earlier shipping/transport.

The shipment was unloaded on 12 March 2020, one day before the major COVID-19 outbreak reached Norway (and the Netherlands). The shipment was therefore stowed in a confined and secured area awaiting better circumstances, and physical possibilities to inspect demilitarization. Up to now, it was unfortunately impossible to arrange such a physical inspection due to COVID-restrictions. In order to keep this project running my Defence

colleagues are presently looking for alternative ways – i.e. without our physical presence – which will lead to demilitarization of the virtual last batch of cluster munitions.

At this very moment the Netherlands possesses 1854 (M42 x 1348 and M46 x 506 pcs) dismantled projectiles (explosive submunitions), previously separated from the original cluster weapons. These explosive submunitions remain within the scope of the convention and will be appropriately consumed or phased out and steadily disappear from our national inventory.

As before, we will continue to keep States Parties abreast of the progress, including through our national Article 7 transparency reports.

Thank you Mr. President.