



**KINGDOM OF BELGIUM**

**Dublin Diplomatic Conference  
On Cluster Munitions**

**Dublin, 19 May 2008**

**Opening Statement by  
H. E. Mr. Werner Bauwens  
Special Envoy for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation**

Mr. Chairman,

First of all let me thank the Government of Ireland for hosting this diplomatic conference and congratulate you on assuming the Chair. I can assure you the full cooperation of the Belgian delegation in reaching the goals set for this conference within the agreed timeframe.

Belgium offered its good offices to launch the Oslo process and to keep it on track, today more than ever since we are embarking on the last stretch towards the end game.

While fully associating myself with the statement made by Slovenia on behalf of the European Union, I would like to add some brief national observations.

In the run up to the Dublin conference, Belgium has undertaken a new round of diplomatic demarches in all the States that had indicated their intention to participate in these negotiations. In doing so, we wanted to call for a full political commitment to reach an agreement in Dublin on an international legally binding instrument to prohibit cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians. Belgium is convinced that given political will, we will be able to overcome the remaining drafting difficulties.

We must aim for a result that makes a real difference on the ground in conflict areas of the past, the present and the future; the difference between life or death, healthy or injured and maimed children continued devastation or healing reconstruction. When looking at the negotiations ahead, therefore we have to uphold a level of ambition that is sufficiently high, such as reflected in the draft convention that we have in front of us. The scope, definitions, provisions on stockpile destructions, victim assistance and international cooperation are compatible with the Belgian law of 2006, the first in the world to have banned cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians. The Belgian delegation has been instructed to uphold this level of ambition and to work effectively to associate as many delegations as possible around it.

I will speak briefly on two issues which Belgium considers particularly relevant: stockpile destruction and victim assistance.

Since the entry into force of the Belgian law, our stockpiles of cluster munitions are in the process of being destroyed. The financial cost is approximately 2.8 million Euro. The process is well under way and will be finalized at the latest by spring 2009. The Belgian experience, involving concerted offers and bidding, shows that a multilateral approach to stockpile destruction can be advantageous, considering the size of the stockpiles and the destruction deadlines.

With regard to victim assistance, we are launching an urgent appeal to look at the draft convention as a starting point from which we can further build and expand the provisions, taking into account the experiences of the victims themselves.

Mr. Chairman,

We expect all delegations gathered here to show the flexibility required to reach such a result. We owe this to the victims of cluster munitions and those in danger of becoming victims. We owe this to them and to the world, because of our joint commitment to respect international humanitarian law and because of our shared values. At the end of this conference, when we meet face to face with the victims of cluster munitions, we want to be able to share a positive evaluation of its outcome.

Thank you for your attention.