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The Dublin Diplomatic Conference of Cluster Munitions 19 -30 May 2008

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR STEFFEN KONGSTAD OF NORWAY 30 MAY

Mr President,

This is an important moment; this is a moment of joy and gratitude.

In 7 months until we meet again to sign the cluster munitions convention. There might be some further time before this convention enters into force. But there will not be another minute before we start implementing the Convention. In practical terms the implementation starts today and will prove the value of our work.

Today we shall allow ourselves to celebrate in appreciation of the result that we have achieved together. To further develop and improve international law and build norms is an obligation we have. We should all be committed to conduct our multilateral work constructively. During these two weeks in Dublin we have demonstrated our ability to do so. Let us bring with us that spirit to other multilateral fora.

Let us reflect for a moment about how we got here and how this can help us to achieve similar successes in the future.

Firstly, by insisting that it was essential to approach this issue from the humanitarian angle we were able to take action in an adequate way. In essence, this process and the new Convention on Cluster Munitions, is disarmament as humanitarian action.

Secondly, a key element of our success has been the effective partnership between affected and non-affected states. The commitment by states contaminated by cluster munitions or other explosive remnants of war has been invaluable. Their competence and credibility has been an inspiration for us all.

Thirdly; the instrumental partnership with civil society. The key to the success of this partnership lies in the mutual respect for our different roles, while at the same time being able to listen with an open mind thus creating a common perception of the problem and its response. Including civil society at the negotiation table is an efficient way of ensuring that what we do is checked against reality; the humanitarian organisations provide competence and experience as implementers of humanitarian assistance. As donors we know that seeing and being in affected countries changes the whole perception and gives understanding of the problems that no presentation can equal. Recognising this is an essential part of the partnership.

With a shared understanding and appreciation of our individual circumstances, competence and roles we can make the best outcome possible in any humanitarian disarmament issue - or in other pressing issues on the international agenda.

The Oslo-process also benefited from its facts-based approach. The contributions from the UN-organisations with substantial field experience, led by UNDP have been invaluable. The wholehearted support of the ICRC who has had this issue on their agenda since 2000 has been a unique partner of our work given special role in their mandate to promoters of international humanitarian law. We know this process has posed challenges to many institutions and organisations, but you rose to the challenge in the most convincing and credible way.

The process has delivered an excellent result. We have now adopted a strong convention that will have concrete impact on the ground.

Regarding Article 21 in the Convention we note that delegations from all regions agree that this convention does not hinder future international military operations, even if some participating states may not be party to the convention. Moreover, we note that the expression of this principle in the convention does not create loopholes that could have diminished confidence among other States Parties.

Last, but definitely not least, we owe gratitude for providing the final needed element to succeed to our hosts; the key to a successful party lies in creating the right atmosphere of friendliness and trust. No one has ever given us a better setting for success, and we are deeply grateful for Ireland's generous hospitality and the outstanding Irish leadership.

I also wish to express a particular thanks to you, Ambassador O'Ceallaigh and your Irish colleagues and to those who have worked hard behind the scenes in the secretariat.

Thank you, Mr. President