

General exchange
of views.

Austrian General Statement for the CCM 2MSP

delivered by Ambassador Alexander Kmentt, Head of the Austrian Delegation,

Beirut, 13 September 2011

Thank you very much Mr President.

Let me congratulate you on assuming Presidency and for hosting this important conference. Let me also take the opportunity to thank the Lebanese Presidency the hospitality and the dedication to organize this conference. We are delighted to be in Beirut and we want to extend to you the full support of the Austrian delegation for the upcoming week.

We would also like to give particular thanks to the Lebanese team in Geneva Ambassador Najla Assaker and Ahmad Arafa for all their efforts in the preparation of the 2MSP including the first intersessionals and to the UNDP team led by Sara Sekkenes and all others who have contributed to the preparation of this conference. We also welcome again the presence of many representatives of civil society. This has and continues to be a key element of the success and drive to achieve progress on our important issue. We are particularly grateful for the presence of survivors of cluster munitions in our midst to help us on not losing sight of the humanitarian perspective of our work.

In addition to the statement delivered on behalf of the EU, Austria would like to make a few more comments. Almost one year has passed since we met in Laos at the 1MSP of the Convention on Cluster Munitions where we agreed on committing on the Vientiane Action Plan. Much has been achieved.

The overall balance is an encouraging one: membership has increased by a third, well more than half of the UN Members States support the Convention. The norm against cluster munitions has been strengthened. We would like to commend all those States that have become a Party to the Convention and all signatories who are taking steps towards that end. In particular, pleased about the newest ratifications of Afghanistan, Cook Islands and Swaziland. Throughout the last year there has been progress on the commitments and on all aspects of the implementation of the Convention. The Beirut Progress Report is testimony of the accomplishments of the CCM community.

What we see here in Lebanon is also very encouraging. It is an example that – while the use of cluster munitions cannot be undone – communities can face and overcome also such terrible challenges. And even people who have directly suffered from cluster munitions can have hope of and success in rebuilding their lives. It is important and inspiring that out of the terrible injustice inflicted upon innocent civilians (that use of cluster munitions represents), such a positive and strong message can emerge. Yesterday's field trips and the documentary at the opening ceremony were important reminders of the importance of what we are trying to achieve here.

But there are also important challenges ahead of us and much remains to be done. Many countries face enormous problems and require assistance to implement the convention and overcome the cluster munitions problems that their communities face. There have been some disturbing cases of use of cluster munitions. We believe that it is important for us as CCMs States Parties to speak out strongly against any action contrary to the core principles of the Convention. Universalisation of the Convention remains high on our agenda. We need to increase our efforts. We have grown to 110 states but the norm and stigma against cluster munitions is by no means secured. In our view, there is even a potential challenge to the very fundamentals of the Convention on Cluster Munitions that is taking place in the context of the negotiations of the CCW in Geneva. As CCM states parties, we need to be mindful of our commitment that due to their unacceptable humanitarian consequences, we need to "discourage in every way possible all use, development, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions".

The 2MSP therefore takes place at a crucial junction. We have the opportunity to send a strong political message against cluster munitions and about our shared commitment to end the harm caused by these terrible weapons. Let me thank you Mr. President for the draft Beirut Declaration, which is an important document that will give exactly this political signal to the international community.

The 2 MSP also has the opportunity to take decisions that can put the implementation of the Convention on a very solid track. Austria supports therefore the proposal for the implementation Architecture and we also support the setting up of an Implementation Support Unit.

We are very much looking forward to a week of fruitful discussions and further progress toward our common goal of a world without cluster munitions.

THANK YOU