

Iran

**Statement, by H.E. Mr Gholamhossein Dehghani
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**The Second Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on Cluster
Munitions.
Beirut-September 12,2011-09-13**

In the Name of Allah the Compassionate the Merciful

Mr. President,

Allow me to begin by congratulating you on the assumption of the Chair of the Second Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the people and Government of Lebanon for hosting this meeting and the kind hospitalities provided to us.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, based on its fundamental values, attaches utmost importance to the protection of civilians from the impacts of any conflict. In our view, the protection of civilians during any conflict is not only an obligation under international humanitarian law but it is also a moral and religious duty, which should be strictly observed. According to the Islamic teachings, no military objective could justify the use of weapons in a way endangering innocent civilians.

During the 8-Year War imposed by Saddam's regime on the Islamic Republic of Iran and despite the indiscriminate use of prohibited weapons, including chemical weapons by that regime against Iranian military personnel and civilians, the Iranian forces avoided at all cost to reciprocate in kind. At the same time, the Islamic Republic of Iran took all necessary measures to spare precious lives of civilians and avoided operating in a way to endanger them.

After the end of the War, my country faced huge problems stemming from contaminated lands due to the leftover mines and cluster munitions and other explosives. The remnants of more than 20 million mines and cluster munitions and other explosives across 4.1 million hectares of our territories turned the southern and western parts of the country into one of the most contaminated areas in the world.

The cleaning operation began immediately after the end of the War, and, to this end, the Center for Demining of the contaminated regions (IRMAC) was

established. The Center focuses on all requirements for the cleaning of the contaminated regions, including detecting and marking the contaminated regions, raising awareness of the public, educating personnel for demining and cleaning and investing on the manufacture of the required equipment. Manufacturing demining machines such as TAFTAN 1 and TAFTAN 2 are examples of the work done by the IRMAC.

Despite repeated requests made to the relevant international organizations, the Islamic Republic of Iran is yet to receive any substantial help in this regard. Unfortunately, due to the unjust sanctions put in place by some western countries against our nation, we are facing a host of problems in purchasing equipment needed for demining and cleaning purposes. At this juncture, I take this opportunity to appreciate the cooperation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) with the IRMAC and the positive and constructive approach taken by this Committee.

Mr. President,

Besides the importance of the issue before the present meeting, the venue in which the meeting is convened has a particular significance. Lebanon is the symbol of resistance against and victory over the aggression, occupation, cruelty and brutal use of inhumane weapons.

During the 33-day war, According to the United Nations and human rights organizations, about 4 million bomblets in southern Lebanon were unleshed during that time by the invader. Up to 1 million of them failed to explode and endanger civilians after the conflict.

As a result of the leftover cluster bombs, many civilians were killed in southern Lebanon since the war ended in August 2006. This brutality against civilians in Southern Lebanon and later in Gaza is not only a grave violation of international law but also it goes against all the basic norms and ethics prevailing in human society.

Mr. President,

It is regrettable that due to the invasions by foreign forces in our region, this area of the world has turned into a test site for different types of weapons. Depleted uranium, phosphorous shells and cluster munitions, to mention few, are among many types of deadly weapons that were used in recent conflicts in our region. These phenomena create long-lasting problems for the peoples in the region. Life-long disabilities, birth defects, high increase in incidences of cancer and leukemia in children as well as different kinds of cancer and new types of diseases in adults are among the consequences of the use of these weapons in our region.

Cluster munitions were used in large scale in Iraq and Afghanistan. From 2001-2002, the United States dropped 1,228 cluster bombs containing

248,056 submunitions in Afghanistan, and U.S. and its ally used almost 13,000 cluster munitions containing an estimated 1.8 to 2 million submunitions during the first three weeks of the combat in Iraq in 2003. Evidence proves that the US used cluster submunitions (BLU-97/B) in the same color and size as air-dropped humanitarian food packets which have resulted in casualties among civilians including women and children.

Mr. President,

Based on our experiences with the contaminated regions, we support every effort at the regional and international level to eliminate the use of weapons that create long-lasting contaminations and cause indiscriminate risks to military personnel and civilians. We are also prepared to share our experiences with those countries affected by the use of these weapons.

We commend and support all efforts made to save the civilians from the menace of cluster munitions. However it goes without saying that a convention regulating the aspects of cluster munitions in order to be effective should include the major producers or possessors and the former users of these munitions. So we believe that such an instrument to be universal and effective should be concluded in a multilateral environment within the framework of the United Nations

Mr. President,

Let me conclude by expressing my sincere hope that the Second Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions would succeed to have positive outcomes in support of the countries affected by the use of cluster munitions. I reiterate the preparedness of my country to cooperate with those states and international organizations that are active in clearing contaminated lands from mines and cluster munitions.

Thank you Mr. Chairman