

**Intervention of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
at the Second Meeting of State Parties
to the Convention on Cluster Munitions**

Beirut 12-16 September 2011

agenda point nr. 9: General exchange of views

Madam President,

Like other speakers before me, I should like to congratulate the Government of Lebanon with hosting this very important event. Your Government's hospitality makes us feel very welcome here in Beirut.

The Netherlands aligns itself with the statement of the representative of the European Union. I would also like to speak on behalf of my own country.

The Netherlands is proud to be present at this second meeting of state parties, for the first time as a state party itself. On the 1st of August of this year the treaty entered into force in the Netherlands. For the government of the Netherlands, this means that we are working hard to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and that we want to do this in the most encompassing manner possible, taking into account the Vientiane Action Plan. Promoting international peace and security is a priority of Dutch foreign policy. We are happy to comply as swiftly as possible with the international obligations that we have signed up to.

Madam President,

The norms agreed upon in Dublin on May 30th, 2008 and signed by almost 100 states in Oslo on December 3rd 2008, contribute directly to a more just, a safer and a more secure world. More just for those who fell victim to these horrific weapons in the past, as a result of the victim assistance provided for in the Convention. More safe for those living in areas that have been affected in the past through the clearance of polluted areas as foreseen in the treaty. Also, the world will be safer for future generations because of the prohibition of the use and production of cluster munitions.

Universalization

And finally the Convention leads to a more secure world for states as well, since these indiscriminate weapons can hardly be considered a contribution to national security or international peace and stability. The use of cluster bombs may actually lead to growing regional instability and a spiral of violence. This is an important argument to use when we try to convince reluctant governments to leave their doubts behind and take the necessary steps towards accession and ratification of the Convention. 109 signatories, including –so far- 63 State Parties, is still quite far away from universality. Given the devastating and inhuman consequences of this weapon, our common goal should certainly remain attaining universal validity of the Convention.

Madam President,

International assistance

The Netherlands has always been a large donor in the field of demining and victim assistance. Over the past years the Netherlands spent on a yearly basis almost 15 million EURO's in subsidies to relevant NGO's and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS). Not all this money is exclusively destined to cluster munitions clearance and victims of cluster munitions. But cluster munitions are being cleared in many projects that also deal with landmines and explosive remnants of war.

Madam President

Stock pile reduction

The Netherlands has already almost completed the process of destroying our stockpile. All our BL755 cluster munitions for air force use, and all our cluster munitions for artillery use, have been destroyed. The CBU87-air force cluster combs and the M261-rockets used by Apache-helicopters will be destroyed by a Norwegian firm. This process will probably be finished by early 2012. The Netherlands is pleased to be able to implement this obligation from the Convention well before its deadline. A detailed report on these and other matters required by the Convention is due shortly.

Madam President,

Let me conclude by expressing my thanks to you and to all the friends of the president in preparing the documents that will lead us towards a fruitful discussion on the implementation of the Convention and on its future. I share with you a feeling of urgency to do our utmost in obtaining a world free of cluster bombs, out of respect for the victims, respect for our own children and for future generations.

Thank you.

Ambassador at Large
H.E. Mr. Michiel den Hond
Beirut, 13 September 2011