



NEW ZEALAND

**SECOND MEETING OF STATES PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON
CLUSTER MUNITIONS
BEIRUT, LEBANON**

GENERAL STATEMENT

**STATEMENT BY DELL HIGGIE,
AMBASSADOR FOR DISARMAMENT**

13 SEPTEMBER 2011

AS DELIVERED

Madam President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

As a country badly affected by the terrible impact of cluster munitions, and as one that has been active in the process to ban them, it is entirely appropriate that Lebanon should be the venue for this Second Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

We thank the Lebanese Government for hosting this important event and for the warm welcome accorded us.

Madam President

None of us who attended the First Meeting of States Parties in Vientiane and participated in last year's field trip will ever forget the harrowing experience of the Lao people from the effects of the use of cluster munitions. Now, here in Lebanon, during yesterday's field trip and by the documentary shown us at our opening ceremony last night, we have once again been reminded of the horror, the personal and economic loss and deprivation, which is inflicted by these armaments.

Our first two meetings have taken place in severely affected nations for good purpose. They have served to underline the humanitarian ethos that is our common cause.

In participating in these meetings, my delegation shares in the sense of tribute to all the casualties of cluster munitions in Lebanon, Laos and elsewhere.

We also share the sense of satisfaction that this process – one with which my country has been so closely involved since its inception - has truly come to fruition. Devastation and suffering of the kind to which I have already alluded cannot be undone, but by our Convention's banning of cluster munitions we have taken crucial and practical steps to ensure that the lessons of history - of human cost - have been learned.

We share also a realisation, one made keener from insights gained from our host countries' experiences, that our work is far from done. This is so across the board and certainly in respect of core activities such as victim assistance and stockpile destruction.

The steady accumulation of Parties to the CCM is both impressive and encouraging. We welcome those States - now 17 of them - that have joined us since the Vientiane meeting, including Swaziland just today. We are particularly pleased to welcome the Cook Islands, as a country from our region, to the CCM family.

We recognise the efforts of all those States who have worked assiduously to swell the number of Parties - as well as the outstanding efforts of the Cluster Munitions Coalition to this same end. In paying tribute to the CMC, I note that -

as with its birth - this Convention's implementation remains a partnership with civil society.

For our part, New Zealand's own universalisation efforts have been directed essentially in our region of the Pacific. In our region, although there has been little, or no, history of possession or use of cluster munitions, there is a strong tradition of support for humanitarian matters and international humanitarian law.

This leads me to the topic of national implementation. As a Friend of the Chair on this issue, and while chairing the session on it at Vientiane last year, we received several requests for an example of legislation which would meet the compliance obligations of those small States not affected by past use or possession of cluster munitions. In response, New Zealand has since drafted a legislative "model" - a very short (two-page) text which we hope will meet the needs of these States. Our model complements the broader-ranging version already prepared by the ICRC and which is capable of application in all situations - including by those States which have possessed cluster munitions or been contaminated by their use.

We hope our simplified version of legislation will assist with the very important objective of accelerating the pace of ratification of, or accession to, the Convention and, therefore, of advancing both its universalisation as well as its effective implementation. This model legislation for small States, along with a checklist of national implementation measures, is amongst the documentation which has been circulated for this Meeting.

Moving on to clearance issues, and specifically with respect to our host country, I would note that New Zealand has taken concrete measures towards reducing the humanitarian harm caused by cluster munitions contamination here in Lebanon. Over 2007 and 2008, we sent teams from the New Zealand Defence Force to Lebanon to help locate and destroy unexploded munitions. Our Defence Force cleared well over 300,000 sq metres of contaminated ground, destroying many cluster munitions in the process.

More widely, our Defence Force teams have had first-hand experience of the dreadful humanitarian cost paid by the victims of cluster munitions not only in Lebanon but also in other countries including Afghanistan, Kosovo, Laos and Mozambique.

In addition to the humanitarian cost, New Zealand has long recognised the social and economic impact of cluster munitions. To this end New Zealand Aid and the New Zealand Defence Force have been active for many years in providing funding and technical assistance, for instance to last year's host country.

New Zealand has been very concerned about the reports this year of the use of cluster munitions. We have made our views known regarding their usage in February in the border conflict between Cambodia and Thailand and we continue to urge both Thailand and Cambodia to become parties to the

Convention as soon as possible. Equally concerning have been the reports of the Libyan Government's use of cluster munitions.

It seems clear to us that the stigmatisation of cluster munitions, achieved through the norms adopted in the Oslo Convention, has now attained a compelling public profile so that any usage does attract widespread international condemnation.

Still generally on the issue of compliance, Madam President, I am confident that we are all fully conscious of our obligations under the Convention to promote its norms and to make our best efforts to discourage States not party to the CCM from using cluster munitions, and never to assist anyone to engage in activity prohibited to a State Party under this Convention.

Compliance with these obligations must be uppermost in our minds whenever there arises a risk that the standards of high humanity set by the CCM may be diminished.

In conclusion, I note Madam President, that it is clear our gathering here in Beirut is a very timely opportunity for a collective assessment of the progress we have made in implementing the Convention's provisions. This meeting is also an opportunity to identify areas that require ongoing attention so as to focus our future work. We welcome the draft Beirut Declaration and Beirut Progress Report and we look forward to our meeting next year in Oslo where, through our collective determination and dedication, we are positive that our Convention will have progressed even further in achieving its goal of ending the suffering caused by cluster munitions.

Thank you, Madam President.