

Statement by Mr. João Pedro Fins do Lago,
Director for Security and Defence Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Head of Delegation of Portugal to the Second Meeting of States
Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions
Beirut, 12 - 16 September 2011

Mr. President,

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you on your election as President of the Second Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, as well as to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to your Government for generously hosting us here today.

Mr. President,

I would like at this point to associate myself with the statement earlier delivered by the distinguished representative of the European Union.

Mr. President,

The efforts that lead us here today honour those that have fallen victim of cluster munitions or struggle with their consequences. The fact that cluster munitions end up impacting mainly on civilians, maiming or killing men, women and, most tragic of all, innocent children, reminds us of how wars keep going on in people's lives many years after taking place.

Similarly to other weapons that we endeavour to ban, such as landmines, cluster munitions can go so far as to affect those who were not even born when the conflict took place, while gravely hindering the economic and social development of affected communities by preventing access to farmland, pastures, as well as other vital resources.

That is why, Mr. President, Portugal, along with many other countries, sought a political and legal solution to this serious humanitarian problem, by actively participating in the Dublin process leading to the signing of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, in Oslo on December 3rd, 2008.

Mr. President,

This year Portugal is proud for finally taking its seat among those countries that have ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions, thus taking one step further

my country's long standing commitment to the eradication of these weapons and their humanitarian negative consequences.

As a token of my Government's resolve, I should like to stress that Portugal fulfilled the obligations established under Article 3 even before ratifying the Convention. Indeed, by early 2010, the Portuguese Armed Forces had completed destroying the whole existing arsenal of cluster munitions. Portugal has as well committed not to acquire this type of weapons ever again.

In addition, Portugal has been actively working in favour of the universalization of the Cluster Munitions Convention. In 2010, Portugal hosted a Seminar, in Lisbon, attended by senior officials of all the Portuguese Speaking African Countries and Timor-Leste. The Seminar provided an excellent opportunity for clarifying the contents of the Convention and promoting accession to it by these six States. In this respect, Portugal notes with great satisfaction that most of these countries have now signed or ratified the Convention.

Mr. President,

We meet here with a clear understanding of our goal: the eradication of cluster munitions. I am pleased to note that so far 63 countries have ratified the Convention. We have come a long way, but we have not gone far enough. The world's largest manufacturers or possessors of cluster munitions are yet to adhere to the high standards set out by the Convention. This is the reason why my Government believes we should continue to support the work that is being done in the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. We are looking forward to an agreement in the upcoming Review Conference.

Mr. President,

Almost a year ago, the Vientiane Action Plan was adopted. We are now called upon to implement it, thus building on the promise of a safer world. I am sure we can deliver on that promise and keep working together for a safer life.

I thank you, Mr. President.