

## **Statement by South Africa at the Second Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions**

Thank you very much, Mr President.

At the outset, my delegation wishes to thank the Lebanese Government for the invitation and for presiding over the Second Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We would also like to thank you for the warm hospitality extended to my delegation in this beautiful city of Beirut. Please be assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Mr President,

South Africa is concerned about the threat posed by cluster munitions. As a Signatory to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), South Africa remains fully committed to the implementation of all its provisions. With regard to South Africa's ratification of the CCM, we can report that, in accordance with Constitutional requirements, we are in the process of consulting with the relevant stakeholders prior to seeking Parliamentary approval. We hope that we will be able to participate as a State Party in the work of the Convention in the near future. In this connection, we welcome the steady progress that has been made in increasing the number of ratifications. We believe that it is necessary to redouble efforts towards the universality of the Convention, with a special focus on the major users and producers of cluster munitions.

In the meantime, my country will continue to play an active role in the work of the Convention as it is our conviction that it represents a landmark in humanitarian disarmament. South Africa has been honoured to be assigned the role of Friend of the President on International Cooperation. We hope that our modest contribution has enhanced the work of the Convention in particular with regard to the implementation of the key provisions of the CCM. As a former producer of cluster munitions, South Africa believes that these weapons have not only become obsolete as weapons of modern warfare, but that their recent use in conflicts have shown them to cause unacceptable harm to civilians, even long after the cessation of active hostilities.

Mr President,

As you are aware, a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Prohibition or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effect (CCW) have for a number of years engaged in negotiations on a possible CCW protocol on cluster munitions. It is expected that the CCW Review Conference that will take place in November this year will make a decision on this matter. In our view, the latest Chair's text continues to raise serious concern, particularly in relation to definitions, prohibitions and restrictions, deferral periods and technical annexes that will, if adopted, reverse the gains made under the CCM. Of particular concern to my delegation is the implicit legitimisation of the continued use and

production of cluster munitions that have been banned under the CCM. We believe that it is incumbent on all States Parties and Signatories of the CCM that are also States Parties to the CCW to work towards an outcome to the CCW process does not in any way undermine the letter or the spirit of the CCM. South Africa remains committed to contributing towards that aim.

Mr President,

In our efforts to implement the Convention, there are a number of challenges that lie ahead of us. There is a need to continue to stigmatise the use of cluster munitions as a weapon of war. In addition, we need to ensure that the existing stockpiles of cluster munitions are destroyed in accordance with the deadlines set by the Convention. We are also concerned about the areas that are still contaminated by unexploded submunitions and other explosive remnants of war. This contamination hampers development as these areas cannot be used for developmental purposes such as agriculture, manufacturing and housing. In this connection, it is prudent that the affected States draw up clearance plans as soon as possible. These should, among others, include maps, surveys, budgets and clear, but realistic timeframes.

Mr President,

The CCM represents a milestone in the development of International Humanitarian Law, as the issue of victim assistance receives particularly attention. It is in this context that my delegation has always emphasised the need for assistance to victims and survivors as being a central pillar to our collective implementation efforts of these relevant international IHL instruments. We view socio-economic integration as key in ensuring that victims lead normal lives and that they have full access to health, education and services based on their special needs. We wish to underscore that the care for victims should be a long term undertaking by States.

With regard to International Cooperation, we wish to emphasise that the implementation of the Convention largely depends on those in a position to do so to provide assistance to those requesting assistance. It is precisely because most of the highly affected States are developing States that do not have the necessary resources and expertise to achieve the noble goals of this Convention. Furthermore, effective international cooperation and assistance serves as an incentive for those who are still considering joining the Convention.

Finally Mr President, our former President Nelson Mandela once said in his 1996 State of the Nation address, "We have started to play a role in contributing to peace and other efforts of the international community. This we shall always do, within the limits of our capacity". It is in this context that South Africa will continue to play its modest role by working with others towards the establishment of a truly cluster munitions free world.

I thank you.