



Closing Session:

Concluding remarks by the President of the Third Meeting of States Parties, Ambassador Steffen Kongstad of Norway

We have come to the end of this Meeting and to Agenda item 14 Closure of the Third Meeting of States Parties.

There are a few practical matters I wish to raise before we finish. The Work Programme for 2013 has been presented and adopted as part of the final document.

I warmly welcome the new Coordinators of the Working Groups, namely Afghanistan, Costa Rica, Ghana, Lao PDR, Spain and Sweden. I look forward to working with Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Portugal and Zambia that continue as Coordinators. I also wish to once again thank the Coordinators now ending their terms, namely The Holy See, Austria, Germany and Japan for their tremendous efforts during the past year.

The Coordination Committee Meetings for the Coordinators and the troika of the past, present and future Presidencies will continue to be held in Geneva. The Norwegian Presidency is very much looking forward to working together with you all knowing that we shall benefit from your support and good advice. It is my hope and intention that these meetings will continue to be a constructive forum for deliberate discussions on how progress on implementation of the Convention can be supported. We aim at meeting once a month between now and the Fourth Meeting of States Parties in September next year.

As has been decided by this Meeting there will be an intersessional meeting in Geneva April 2013. Together with the Coordination Committee we wish to design a format of the intersessional meeting that is as productive and effective as possible, bearing in mind that an important function of the intersessionals is also to provide a space where people can gather also outside the meeting room.

We will also organise various meetings in order to find an agreeable solution to the ISU issue.

I once again wish to welcome Zambia as President-designate and host of the Fourth Meeting of States Parties that, as decided, will be held in Lusaka 10-13 September 2013.

Finally, I wish to make a few concluding remarks.

We feel that this has been a very productive meeting and we have seen progress on a number of issues relevant to the implementation and universalisation of the Convention.

The journey towards a ban on cluster munitions has been part of a larger and longer journey to improve International Humanitarian Law and the Protection of Civilians.

Those of us who have had the fortune of meeting survivors of these unacceptable weapons, like Branislav Kapitanovic, Umarbek Pulodov and so many others do not need any further explanation why this work is so important. And, despite their personal experiences they, the survivors, have the strength and courage to stand up and communicate a very strong message. That calls for respect and admiration. They are the source of inspiration and motivation for our work.

To me this meeting, and the years leading up to it, has been a fantastic personal journey. I have met amazing personalities, I have seen misery difficult to comprehend, I have seen courage, dedication and determination far beyond what one would think possible.

It has been a great learning and rewarding experience to work so closely with Lao and Lebanese colleagues. And there have been so many other great partners from civil society, international organisations and among fellow bureaucrats from various parts of the world over these years.

Norway is a relatively small country, but a country that in many ways experience fortunate circumstances. As my Minister would say: As a country with a certain surplus, an obligation and a responsibility to exercise solidarity with those less fortunate follows. And, it is in our national interest to promote International Law, including International Humanitarian Law, the Rule of Law and the Protection of Civilians. These considerations will serve as overriding guiding principles for the coming Norwegian Presidency.

I wish to extend our heartfelt thanks to all delegates having participated in this meeting and the various discussions. You have provided important substantive contributions, and equally important you have contributed to the constructive, positive atmosphere that should be a hallmark of our meetings related to this Convention.

The input we have received from field based actors and organisations, both through statements made in plenary sessions and during the numerous and interesting side-events that have been held, has been inspiring and challenging.

I would like to thank all partners that made possible the successful implementation and outcome of this meeting.

First of all, I acknowledge and thank our Lebanese colleagues for the great amount of work and dedication they have put into this process and their Presidency; that was decisive for the success of this meeting.

I thank the UNDP/BCPR, that have served as interim implementation support unit for the last year and will continue to do so for the next. In particular, I wish to thank the Executive Co-ordinator, Ms Sara Sekkenes.

The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs has provided invaluable support lead by the Secretary General of this meeting, Mr Peter Kolarov.

Civil society organisations, particularly the Cluster Munition Coalition, have yet again been vital in providing attention to the issue and information and a diversity of perspectives and opinions.

I also extend our appreciation to the various UN and other international organisations, and the ICRC for their continued support and contributions.

Our thanks also go to the interpreters and all the conference officers.

A special thank you to the many young people, who have been working as volunteers during this week and conducting a wide range of tasks that made this meeting so productive.

Last, but certainly not least, I thank my colleagues in the Norwegian team for excellent work and support.

I wish you all a safe journey back home.

The Third Meeting of States Parties is closed.