

UK Opening Statement, 3MSP, Oslo, 11 September 2012

Mr President,

Please let me begin by extending my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Government of Norway for hosting this Third meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Permit me also to align the UK delegation with the statement made by the representative of the European Union.

It is a great pleasure to be here today in Oslo where in 2007 the first decisive steps were taken towards our Convention. In little over 5 years what began as an aspirational and seemingly distant goal has flourished into a community of countries who have taken the bold step to prohibit these indiscriminate weapons, destroy their stockpiles and remove their devastating humanitarian legacy. This convention is a shining example of what can be achieved when governments and civil society come together to pursue a common purpose. This spirit of partnership between States, NGOs and International Organisations is at the heart of this Convention's success and we remain grateful to the ICRC, the UN and Cluster Munition Coalition for their on-going commitment and dedication to the Convention.

Mr President

The Convention is one of the most significant disarmament conventions of recent years and, like the Ottawa Convention before it, has made a significant contribution to the body of IHL. It is fitting therefore that Norway – a country which has been at the forefront of efforts to tackle the scourge of cluster munitions and their legacy – should be our hosts this week. I am grateful to your Excellency and your team for all the dedication and long hours of hard work you have put into the preparation and organization to make this week a success.

The Convention has benefitted from the excellent stewardship of the Republic of Lebanon over the last 12 months, for which we are very grateful, and I thank and congratulate the outgoing President for the drive and determination that he and his Government have shown this past year.



Mr President

The Convention came into force in the UK in November 2010. The Convention then and now commands strong cross party and public support. But it is worth recalling that for the UK the decision to sign up to the Convention and relinquish the use of cluster munitions was far from straightforward. We like a number of other fellow signatories' balanced on the one hand military utility and substantial and active military commitments – often undertaken multilaterally with other states, and, on the other, the mounting evidence of the humanitarian consequences of these weapons. Ultimately, with provisions made to protect our ability to continue to cooperate with non-signatories, the weight of the humanitarian and moral argument was overwhelming and decisive.

Mr President

Having taken the difficult, but right decision to join the Convention, we have looked over the past two years to use our leverage and example as a former user state to promote the Convention to encourage others to relinquish their reliance on these weapons.

We have withdrawn 38 million submunitions from operational service and to date over three quarters of these munitions have been destroyed – we remain on course to complete our destruction programme 5 years ahead of our deadline.

And crucially we have maintained, despite the very tough financial conditions, consistent and significant support to many of the world's most severely cluster munition contaminated countries.

Mr President,

Judging the impact of this young Convention in only its 3<sup>rd</sup> year is not entirely straightforward. But what we can state categorically is that 85 million sub-munitions have been destroyed, casualties from cluster munitions are down, support for victims has been prioritized and the reported use of cluster munitions has been comparatively limited, but we remain concerned at recent reports of their use. Of course much remains to be done, but these are significant achievements in their own right.

111 signatories is a significant achievement for a young Convention, and we applaud those countries who have joined the Convention since the Second Meeting of States Parties, but this does nevertheless leave a large number of states outside the Convention and work remains to be done to expand the Convention's reach.

There are encouraging signs that statements of the unacceptable harm caused to civilians by the use of cluster munitions is having a stigmatizing effect, but this is not a substitute for bringing more countries, particularly the major users and producers into the Convention.

We look forward to a fruitful discussion on universalization this week, and hope that we can increase the value of co-ordination between states in our work to promote the Convention. The UK will continue to use all appropriate opportunities, be they bilateral or multilateral, to promote the Convention. In order to maximize the impact of our universalization work we must, however, recognize and adapt our strategies to take into account the different circumstances of non-signatories and explore what we as States parties can do to help overcome constraints. In this regard we hope to play our part in adopting a strategic and coordinated approach to universalization.

To conclude Mr President

Ultimately, it is the practical implementation of the CCM by a greater number of states which will yield the most lasting humanitarian benefit. We are greatly encouraged to see so many non-signatory states represented this week and hope those present will take home the message to their governments that the time has come to be bold and do the right thing by joining our Convention.