

Fourth Meeting of States Parties of the Convention on Cluster Munitions

Lusaka, 10 September 2012

Statement by Austria

**Robert Gerschner, Minister Plenipotentiary
Department for Disarmament, Nonproliferation and Arms Control
Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs of Austria**

Mr. President,

Let me begin by congratulating you for presiding over the Fourth Meeting of States Parties of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. I would also like to express our gratitude to the government of Zambia for organising and hosting this important event.

My delegation further expresses its appreciation to the outgoing Norwegian president for his diligent leadership and his outstanding efforts in advancing the cause of the convention, as well as for the preparation of the draft Lusaka progress report, thereby providing an excellent input to the discussions of this meeting.

We very much welcome the participation and contributions of civil society representatives at this meeting. The partnership of States, international organisations and civil society continues to be crucial for the convention to maximise its potential. We are particularly grateful for the presence of survivors of cluster munitions in our midst. We rely on their expertise and collaboration in assuring that this Treaty is effectively implemented.

Mr. President,

Austria aligns herself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. In addition, allow me to make the following remarks from a national perspective.

Mr. President,

Austria warmly welcomes the States that have joined the Convention in the past year. The steady increase of States Parties is both impressive and encouraging. We thank all partners that have been engaged in universalisation efforts and have provided assistance to States preparing for accession to the Convention. We particularly commend the efforts of the Presidencies, the Coordinators, Ghana and Portugal, as well as the Cluster Munition Coalition and the International Committee of the Red Cross in this regard. Austria continues to support the universalisation of the Convention by using every appropriate occasion at bilateral and multilateral levels.

Continuing allegations of use of cluster munitions by a State not party put additional emphasis on the continuing importance of the issue of universalisation. Austria has been among those States that have publicly expressed concern on the incidents. In this regard, we commend the determination of the Zambian presidency to use this conference to send a strong signal. The concept paper on universalisation prepared by Zambia is an excellent basis for continuing our discussions on the issue.

Mr President,

In the three years since its entry into force, the Convention on Cluster Munitions has proven to be a key component of the broader humanitarian normative framework for the protection of civilians. This is an issue to which Austria attaches great importance. In particular, the Convention's underpinning focus on the indiscriminate and excessive effects of cluster munitions – both at the time of use and their long-term humanitarian impact – has reinforced and further strengthened the core principles of distinction and proportionality as essentials of international humanitarian law.

Examining the Convention on Cluster Munitions as a component of the broader humanitarian normative framework for the protection of civilians, we would also like to highlight the role of the Convention in the assistance to victims in armed conflict. Building upon the strong legal obligations on victim assistance in Article 5 and Article 6 of the Convention, the CCM in our view has a leading role to play in ensuring and promoting victim assistance. We regard a three-fold approach as most promising in order to ensure to survivors, affected families and communities in an armed conflict that their rights and needs are adequately addressed: (1) To effectively implement

the victim assistance obligations under this Convention as well as under other related international legal instruments; (2) To promote the rights and needs of victims of armed violence beyond the realm of a specific international legal instrument; and (3) To enhance the collaboration among various legal communities mandated to address the rights and needs of survivors, victims as well as persons injured through other causes, including under the CCM, the Mine Ban Convention, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons as well as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Second Meeting of States Parties in Beirut in 2011 took the decision to establish an Implementation Support Unit to assist States Parties in fulfilling their obligations under the Convention. Since 2011, States Parties have been engaging in the discussions on how to ensure a sustainable and predictable funding model for this Implementation Support Unit and at the same time accommodate the national views of States Parties. While we would like to pay tribute to the excellent support that the UNDP has provided as an interim secretariat, we are well aware that a durable solution is indispensable for the ISU to fully perform its mission., i.e. to provide sufficient support to the States Parties to implement their obligations under the Convention. The Presidencies of Lebanon and Norway have invested a great amount of efforts into preparing such a decision. From our point of view, the remaining difficulties are by no means insurmountable.

Mr President,

In conclusion let me assure you of my delegation's full support for your guidance of this meeting. We are looking forward to contributing to the discussions on the progress achieved and the challenges that remain in our common endeavour to strengthen the convention and universalise its norms, with the ultimate goal of achieving a world without cluster munitions.

Thank you, Mr. President.