

**Fourth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on
Cluster Munitions
(9-13 September 2013, Lusaka, Zambia)**

KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Mr. President,

I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as President of the Fourth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions and express my thanks to the Government of Zambia for hosting this meeting, the first Conference on cluster munitions in Africa .

I'd like also to congratulate all the people who contributed to the organization of the fantastic reception you offered yesterday evening.

Belgium was the 1st country in the world to adopt a legislation banning cluster munitions in June 2006 even before the Oslo Convention was negotiated.

Since then Belgium has continued to invest actively in the fight against cluster munitions and joined the efforts of governments and NGO's that led to the signature of the convention.

As it is the case with other conventions, universalization remains a challenge when a significant number of countries have joined already. Yet since the 3rd MSP, seven signatories have ratified the convention and one more country has acceded to it.

The complete ban on cluster munitions has already led some countries which are not yet able to join the Convention to reassess their policies about them and we are convinced that more and more this type of weapons will be marginalized.

Though it is obvious that accession to a legally binding instrument is indispensable to achieve the objective, our objective, of a world free of cluster munitions we still have some way to go in insuring the formal universal recognition of the convention and we still have to convince major stakeholders to abide by its rule.

While it is obvious that more and more actors, including in the military environment, appear to be willing to show at least restraint and prudence in their military planning, we should remain conscious of the fragility and possible reversibility of these effects of what we call the stigmatization of cluster munitions as inhumane weapons.

All State parties need to act to promote the universalization of the Convention as provided for in its art.21 and Belgium asks its diplomatic network to undertake numerous demarches in that direction. And of course we will continue to do so.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions as the Convention of Ottawa banning anti-personal mines embody the humanitarian disarmament approach by creating distinctive and uncompromising legal regimes aimed at protecting civilians and ending human suffering.

The fast-track diplomatic processes that led to the creation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions came from of a group of like-minded countries that united in their common objective of placing the protection of civilians above other considerations. Both treaties achieve the clearest and highest legal standards possible through absolute prohibitions of the weapons rather than regulating them.

Another characteristic of these humanitarian disarmament treaties is the genuine cooperation and substantial partnerships between governments, international

organisations and civil society. This collaboration was evident both in the processes leading to the creation of the treaties as well as the way they have been carried out.

Beyond the dreadful damage and suffering they inflict upon individuals cluster munitions are also used to disorganize vast areas. Used to block access to roads, disorganize communication networks and prevent people from cultivating thousands of otherwise fertile fields, they also deeply alter the socio-economic development of areas already badly affected by conflict and where the average income per capita is generally very low. Contributing to the destruction of cluster munitions projects and projects on victim assistance are the two guidelines of Belgium's action.

This is why we support the efforts of the group of the «ban advocates», who appeal to the testimonies of victims from which emerge a formidable force and a real hope, to promote the convention. Their role has been and continues to be crucial in the process and the universalization of the convention depends on them too. We admire their efforts to develop an integrated approach and the much needed synergies between all relevant instruments, including the Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities.

Implementing the obligations of the State Parties is essential and I would like to underline among them the obligation of reporting of article 7, as its ultimate goal is to have a clear view of the situation in the State Parties, of their objectives, priorities and of their possible assistance needs.

Belgium as coordinator for reporting will propose, later in the Conference, concrete actions to enhance the reporting obligation of art.7 as well on the quantitative as on the qualitative level.

Finally Mr President I would like to add a few words after having heard attentively the intervention the Swiss

delegation just made about the ISU. We have to examine it more in details but our first impression is that it is perfectly in line with the global consensus that exists already between the States Parties on most of the points related to the ISU.

The Swiss proposal has the great advantage to enable the creation of an ISU, right now, at this Conference in Lusaka, and we are convinced that having an agreement on that point would be a very positive sign for the Convention and a real achievement for the Conference of Lusaka.

Mr. President,

I'd like to conclude in thanking you again for hosting this meeting and in wishing you a full success for this Conference.

Thank you, Mr. President