



ICRC

**Fourth Meeting of States Parties to the
Convention on Cluster Munitions**

Lusaka, Zambia, 10 September 2013

Statement by Mr Olivier Vodoz
Vice-President
International Committee of the Red Cross

Your Excellency,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here at the Fourth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. It is fitting that this event is taking place in Lusaka, given the lead role that Zambia played in the development of the Convention and as one of the first countries to ratify it. On behalf of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), I would like to commend Zambia for its efforts in promoting the Convention and helping to ensure its full implementation. We look forward to working with Zambia as President of the Meeting of States Parties in the coming year.

The success that the Convention is having in helping to end the use of cluster munitions and reduce the suffering they cause is evident from the number and range of countries attending this meeting. Present here today are States that have used cluster munitions in past conflicts, those with stockpiles of these weapons, States with significant numbers of cluster munitions victims on their territory and States with extensive cluster-munitions contamination. The meeting also includes countries which, while never having used, developed or stockpiled cluster munitions, have helped further the humanitarian goals of the Convention by providing assistance to affected countries and by ensuring that adequate laws and regulations are in place to prevent and suppress any prohibited activity. This diverse range of countries is an indication that cluster munitions are widely viewed as unacceptable weapons.

The ICRC welcomes the fact that the theme of this Conference is the universalization of the Convention. We believe that global acceptance of the Convention's obligations is crucial to the success of the treaty and its goal of putting "an end for all time to the suffering and casualties caused by cluster munitions". When all countries have ceased using cluster munitions, destroyed their stockpiles and cleared contaminated land, we can truly say that the dangers posed by cluster munitions are behind us.

And every year that goal gets closer. It is encouraging that the number of States joining the Convention continues to grow. As we have heard, eight States have ratified or acceded since the Third Meeting of States Parties, bringing the total number of States Parties to 83. Twenty-nine States remain signatories to the Convention and, through their signature, are committed to the goals of the Convention. I take this opportunity to urge those signatory States to ratify the treaty as quickly as possible.

The promotion of the Convention is an important, but sometimes overlooked, obligation of each and every State Party. This requirement is spelt out in Article 21, whereby each State Party is obliged to encourage all countries to join the Convention with the aim of achieving universal adherence. No other treaty of international humanitarian law has such an express commitment.

Equally important is the Convention's requirement for States Parties to discourage the use of cluster munitions. In the view of the ICRC, this requirement is crucial to universalizing the Convention's norms. We are pleased that many States Parties have expressed concern when cluster munitions have been used by States not party to the Convention. Fortunately, such use has been limited since the Convention entered into force in 2010. Nevertheless, voicing concern about the use of such weapons helps to further stigmatize cluster munitions and to strengthen the perception that their use by any country or armed group is unacceptable.

Promoting adherence to the Convention, and discouraging the use of cluster munitions, help bring us closer to a world free of these weapons. Yet in the ICRC's view, it is equally important to ensure full implementation of the Convention at the national level. The elimination of cluster munitions and the mitigation of their consequences depend on action

being taken domestically by every single State Party, regardless of whether it is affected by or has stockpiles of cluster munitions.

As they have done with regard to other aspects of this Convention, States are making progress in adopting the legislative and administrative measures required at the national level to ensure its full implementation. Yet that progress, in our view, remains slow. We urge those States that have not already done so to develop and adopt such measures as a matter of urgency. This will help ensure that the commitments made by States at the international level are more easily understood and followed by armed forces and national agencies. In our view, the adoption of national legislation to prevent and suppress violations of the Convention, and the incorporation of the Convention's norms into military doctrine and training, are particularly important.

For its part, the ICRC continues to promote adherence to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and its full implementation. In many countries, we do so in cooperation with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and coordinate our efforts with those of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. To us, this treaty is fundamental to efforts to limit the civilian suffering caused by armed conflict and bring an end to the use of weapons that cause unacceptable harm. We are happy to share our perspectives on these efforts over the next few days. We look forward to discussing how regional approaches can be used to increase adherence to the Convention.

In closing, the ICRC believes that the universalization and implementation of the Convention are important elements of achieving a world free of cluster munitions. Through the collective efforts of States and organizations, there has been steady progress in these areas, but more remains to be done. The continued use of cluster munitions by some States makes it clear that we must intensify our efforts to expand acceptance of this Convention. The ICRC remains committed to this endeavour, and we look forward to working with you to achieve that goal.

Thank you.