

## Check against delivery

### ICRC statement on universalization

As indicated in the statement made by the ICRC Vice-President in the opening session yesterday, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is pleased that universalization is the theme of this conference. Extending the Convention's obligations to all States is an essential part of ending the tragic costs of cluster munitions. Indeed, at a time when many States Parties are working to implement the Convention's requirements at the national level, we feel that it is useful to highlight the ongoing efforts of States and organizations to promote the Convention and discuss how we may focus our energies on expanding membership in this important humanitarian instrument.

Overall, the ICRC is pleased with the pace of ratifications thus far in light of the Convention's relatively young age. Yet, it is clear that the efforts to increase adherence must continue, in particular the efforts to urge signatory States to join the Convention. Signatory States have already committed themselves to the humanitarian goals of the Convention. We would urge them to take the next steps necessary to become States Parties before the 2014 Meeting of States Parties.

Regional events have been an important part of the work thus far to promote the Convention and we believe that such efforts should continue. The events held in Ghana, Croatia and most recently in Togo have helped to facilitate regional dialogue about the Convention and further consideration of the Convention among States that are not yet party to it. We certainly welcome these kinds of events and commend these States for their initiatives in this area..

The ICRC itself uses regional events as vehicles to promote adherence to the Convention. One example is the annual regional IHL seminar for States of southern and east Africa which recently took place in Pretoria and was attended by 16 States. One of the issues discussed at this meeting was the possibility of making Africa the first continent to have achieved universal ratification of the Convention. Similar IHL meetings are held in other parts of the world. These annual IHL implementation meetings will be convened again in 2014. We also anticipate hold 2 regional events specifically on the Convention in the coming year.

The useful role of regional events underlies the questions posed in the Lusaka Progress Report, which asks how regional approaches can be utilised to increase the rate of ratification and accession. As I indicated a moment ago, we believe that regional events are a useful approach to promoting adherence to the Convention. Yet, for such meetings to succeed and increase adherence there must be follow-up and continued engagement with participating States. Additional discussions in the capitals of States not party to the Convention will also be necessary, particularly with the ministries most likely to be involved in the Convention's implementation. How to better ensure that this subsequent engagement occurs might be an issue for future discussions. Another issue for consideration may be the extent to which the organizations of regional economic communities could assist in universalization efforts.

In closing, the ICRC like many others attending this conference is concerned about reports of the use of cluster munitions and the inevitable humanitarian consequences following such use. It is regrettable that such use is witnessed despite the stigmatization impact the convention has had and the wide perception of cluster munitions as unacceptable weapons. It is important that States speak out when such weapons are used as many States here have done. Nevertheless, it is an indication as to why universalization efforts are so important and why there is a need to double our efforts in this area.