



Convention on Cluster Munitions 4MSP, Lusaka, Zambia
General Statement
Delivered by Ambassador Dell Higgin
10 September 2013

Mr President

New Zealand warmly congratulates you, Foreign Minister Simuusa, on assuming today your position at the head of our growing family. We would like to thank both you and your team for the excellent welcome we have all received here in Lusaka and we wish Zambia all the very best for its forthcoming year as President of the Cluster Munitions Convention.

We assure you of New Zealand's full support as you carry forward your aspiration to make Africa the first continent to achieve full membership of the Convention. Since arriving here, Mr President, we have learnt the significance of the eagle on the Zambian flag. We know, therefore, that you are committed to achieving your aspirations.

Zambia's history of leadership on cluster munition issues is well known. It was the fifteenth State to ratify the Convention, and the third in Africa. Zambia has never used, produced, or stockpiled cluster munitions, but it has been a victim of their use, and its successful effort to rid its territory of contamination has been rightly recognised.

Africa, as a continent, has in the past seen more than its share of cluster munitions use and contamination. You reminded us this morning, Mr President, that Africa remains, indeed, the worst affected by cluster munitions. It is no surprise, then, that Africa's collective response has been an overwhelming rejection of these inhumane weapons: 42 African States, far more than in any other region of the world, are now either parties or signatories to the Convention.

The high number of African States represented in this hall today is a testament to Africa's commitment to this Convention. We welcome also the excellent representation from all other regions. New Zealand was pleased to support the sponsorship programme for this MSP in order to enable the broadest possible participation in the work of this meeting.

At the conclusion today of Norway's Presidency, New Zealand pays tribute to the tireless efforts over the past year of our Norwegian President, Ambassador Steffen Kongstad, and his team in promoting accession to and advancing compliance with the Convention. We note Norway's comments this morning regarding the consultations they have conducted on the important issue of funding of the CCM's Implementation Support Unit and can support Norway's conclusion that it is often wise to "draw some deep breaths". We must reach agreement on a permanent basis for funding the ISU.

The CCM is in excellent heart. There has been good progress in implementing its goals and in expanding its membership since we last met in Oslo. My delegation would like to warmly welcome the eight new States Parties who have joined us since then and, pursuant to our role as Friend of the

Chair for National Implementation, we stand ready to assist new Parties - or existing ones - with any assistance they may need to put in place the legislation and other administrative measures which may be necessary to give full effect to the Convention under their constitutional system. As ICRC Vice President Vodoz said this morning national implementation is a “particularly important” issue and the success of our Convention depends on it.

May I take this opportunity to put in a plug for tomorrow’s lunchtime side event which New Zealand and our Zambian hosts are sponsoring on the subject of national implementation. We will welcome attendance by all colleagues here.

Domestic implementation remains key to securing the real promise of the Convention: no more cluster munition victims. The video we saw yesterday, accompanying Zambia’s theme song for this meeting, reminded us again of the horror that can only too easily be inflicted by cluster munitions on civilian communities. Last week’s incident in Lao PDR, referenced earlier today by Ambassador Kongstad, is another reminder of the real-world consequences of these inhumane armaments. Of course, most cogent of all is the presence among us here of actual victims: their experiences remain our prime motivating force.

Our Lusaka meeting has two excellent themes for its centrepiece. One signals the importance of pushing forward on the Convention’s universalisation and the other puts a renewed spotlight on international humanitarian law and the unacceptability of the suffering cluster munitions cause to civilians.

Right now, Mr President, there is an unusually heightened focus on the sort of weapons that the international community regards as acceptable – or unacceptable - to use in conflict situations.

I am sure that every one of us here regards the use of chemical weapons as abhorrent, completely unacceptable, and illegal both on the battlefield and off it. Chemical weapons attract universal opprobrium – and rightly so.

No one would deny that the norm against the use of cluster munitions is at a significantly earlier stage of evolution than is the norm against chemical weapons. Our cluster munitions prohibition is, after all, only a very few years old. But the humanitarian ethos underlying our ban, its commitment to human security and to the advancement of international humanitarian law, have meant that it already has considerable force on the global stage. Any use of cluster munitions (as we have, indeed, faced again very recently) is now met with strong condemnation by our community of states and civil society. My Delegation has no doubt that history will not be on the side of future users of cluster munitions.

It was, of course, civil society that first understood, quite some years ago, that “history” needed to be changed regarding the acceptability of cluster munitions. New Zealand and many other governments here were pleased to breathe life into the process which culminated three years ago with the entry-into-force of our Convention. The partnership that existed between States and civil society then continues to this day. We look forward to continuing to work with all stakeholders to reinforce the Convention’s standing and its normative influence as we follow the Zambian eagle forward.