

Convention on Cluster Munitions: Fourth Meeting of State Parties

10. September 2013

Opening Statement:

**Ambassador/Permanent Representative Steffen Kongstad,
President of the Third Meeting of States Parties**

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Distinguished colleagues, friends of the Convention on Cluster Munitions

Let me take this opportunity to first thank the Government of Zambia for their great and friendly hospitality, which was demonstrated by the generous and lavish reception last night, and for their efforts to prepare this Fourth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, here in Lusaka this week. It is a real pleasure to be here, as it has been to work closely with Zambia over the last year, both in the Troika and in the Coordination Committee. I am confident that under the able leadership of the Honourable Mr. Wilbur Simuusa, the Foreign Minister of Zambia, this meeting will be productive – helping our community to make further strides towards the universalization and effective implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

At the outset, I would also like to convey my sincere thanks to the States Parties for giving me the honour last September to assume the Presidency of the Third Meeting of States Parties.

Distinguished colleagues,

This morning the Norwegian Presidency comes to an end. Over the last twelve months, the Presidency team has cooperated closely with other States Parties, the Coordination Committee and the Interim Implementation Support Unit to promote universal adherence to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and to strengthen the tools at our disposal for realising its full, effective implementation.

Before turning to the election of the President for the Fourth Meeting of States Parties, let me take a moment to highlight some of our activities in the past year:

1. Most importantly, we have actively promoted the universalization and implementation of the Convention. As part of these efforts, we have made a special effort to learn about the challenges facing affected States. In January, we made a ten-day trip to Thailand, Cambodia, Viet Nam and Lao PDR, with an aim to promote accession to the Convention by countries in Southeast Asia, and to learn more about efforts undertaken in the region to protect civilians from dangers posed by cluster munitions.

In May, we visited Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The trip was occasioned by a workshop in Skopje on the

Implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and it offered many opportunities to discuss ways by which the Convention may be promoted in the region.

2. As President of the 3MSP, I have also condemned the use of cluster munitions in Syria on several occasions. While deeply distraught by these unacceptable actions, I have found the reaction by the international community encouraging. 107 UN Member States voted in favour of General Assembly Resolution 67/262, which strongly condemned the use of cluster munitions in Syria, and a number of States have in statements condemned or otherwise expressed concern with the use of cluster munitions in Syria. This underlines the extent to which the use of cluster munitions today is considered illegitimate, and unbecoming of responsible members of the international community.
3. Drawing on experiences from the Mine Ban Convention, we have sought during our Presidency to initiate a discussion on completion of clearance obligations in Article 4 of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The purpose of this discussion has been to bring clarity to and establish agreement on what is meant by “every effort to identify all contaminated areas” and “completion” of Article 4 obligations well before States Parties meet their deadlines. Convinced that this is an important discussion, we are pleased to present this week a final version of the discussion paper circulated at the Intersessional Meeting in April.
4. In accordance with the work programme adopted at the 3MSP, the Presidency, together with the Thematic Coordinators and the Interim ISU, convened an informal, intersessional meeting in Geneva in April. Seeking to improve the format of that meeting, we were pleased to offer dedicated technical workshops in advance of the actual intersessional meeting this year. Our objective was to develop a format that could both facilitate informal discussions about efforts to implement the Convention, and that simultaneously could allow for in-depth conversations between experts on specific implementation challenges. Our conclusion at the end of that meeting, was that this differentiation had been useful, allowing us to shorten the meeting and make the plenary discussions more attuned to the competence and needs of the majority of stakeholders present. We believe, however, that efforts to further improve the format of such meetings should be an enduring feature of our collective work, as we still can make our discussions more relevant to the implementation of the Convention.
5. Since 3MSP we have also convened nine Coordination Committee meetings. These meetings have provided an important forum for discussion about a wide range of issues relating to the implementation of the Convention. A big thank you goes to the members of the Committee, who have offered invaluable support to our Presidency throughout the year.

6. As mandated by the 3MSP we have also continued consultations on a funding model and the establishment of an Implementation Support Unit. Open-ended consultations with States Parties, Signatory States and other Stakeholders were, as you all know, carried out in February and June in Geneva. Over the course of the last year, we have also conducted informal consultations with a number of States Parties, building on the work that was done by the former Lebanese Presidency. Our objective, since last September, has been to find a solution that could be agreed upon at this Fourth Meeting of States Parties. We prepared a first draft decision that was circulated and debated at the Intersessional Meeting in April, and which was later amended and debated at the open-ended consultation in 26 June. Lastly, we conducted talks with the GICHD on a hosting agreement for the ISU.

After a year of numerous meetings and consultations I can only draw the conclusion that it has not been possible to have agreement on any permanent solution with predictable and sustainable funding. This is regrettable. And I do not see that it would be meaningful to continue the discussions on the funding of an ISU in the current circumstances. I will therefore have to propose that we postpone the decision. We need a rest and a time-out. At the same time we have a commitment to secure sufficient administrative support for the Zambian and following presidencies and the Coordination Committee. To this end we will present a proposal on a temporary arrangement. We will suggest that we ask UNDP/BCPR to continue as Interim ISU for a three year period, that the Review Conference in 2015 mandate the Presidency to seek a solution which can be adopted at the 6MSP in 2016. This interim arrangement will not preclude or prejudice any future decisions of the States Parties. The Beirut decisions on the establishment of an ISU will still be in force. This will allow us to take some deep breaths. This temporary arrangement can obviously only be funded by voluntary contributions. Norway will make her share and we encourage other States Parties in a position to contribute to do so.

7. Recognising that good, accessible information about the Convention, including information about its objectives and achievements to date, is essential for its promotion, we made a special effort early in our Presidency to review and relaunch the official website for the Convention, together with the Interim ISU. Our hope is that the new website, which was launched in February, may serve as a better and more efficient communication tool for the Convention.

Distinguished colleagues,

One year has passed since we gathered for the Third Meeting of States Parties in Oslo. As our Presidency draws to a close, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all States Parties, the CMC, the ICRC, the UNDP-BCPR and other UN

organisations for the support they have provided during our Presidency. We have relied heavily on our colleagues from Lao PDR and Lebanon and in the Coordination Committee. A special thank you to Ambassador Sinjela and her colleagues in the Zambian mission in Geneva.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions was borne by the focused and constructive efforts of multiple actors, working in partnership towards a shared objective: to end human suffering caused by cluster munitions. This partnership remains strong, and is a characteristic feature of the work undertaken under this Convention. And; if anyone had any doubts about the relevance and importance of this Convention and our work, we had just one reminder last week when six boys aged five to thirteen were hit by a cluster bomb, in the Luang Prabang province of the Lao PDR. One died on the spot, one later in hospital and four were seriously wounded.

As we now pass the baton to the next Presidency, I would like to end these remarks by assuring all States Parties of our intention to remain actively engaged in all matters relating to the promotion and implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Working towards ending human suffering caused by cluster munitions is a noble cause to which Norway is fully committed.

Distinguished delegates,

You should have before you the Provisional Agenda of this Meeting, which is contained in document CCM/MSP/2013/1, dated 26 June 2013. Let me now turn to Item 2 of the Provisional Agenda, titled "Election of the President".

As delegations will recall, the Third Meeting of States Parties decided **[I quote]** "to designate the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Zambia, [...], assisted by the Permanent Representative of Zambia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, as President of the Fourth Meeting of States Parties" **[unquote]**, as contained in paragraph 31 of the final report of the Third Meeting (document CCM/MSP/2012/5, dated 15 October 2012).

Against this background, I would like to recommend to the States parties to confirm the Honorable Wilbur Simuusa, MP, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Zambia as the President of the Fourth Meeting of States Parties. I see no opposition **[Gavel]** It is so decided!

I would now like to congratulate Minister Simuusa and to invite him to the podium to assume his position as the President of the Fourth Meeting and to wish him all the success in discharging his duties.

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