

**Convention on Cluster Munitions: Fourth Meeting of States Parties, Lusaka, 9 September 2013**

**High-Level Segment**

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

**Check against delivery**

Your Excellency Mr Michael Chilufya Sata, President of the Republic of Zambia,  
Honourable Mr Wilbur Simuusa, Minister of Foreign Affairs and President-designate for the 4MSP,  
Other Government Ministers and Members of Parliament here present,  
Distinguished colleagues,  
Friends of the Convention on Cluster Munitions,

Let me first thank the Government of Zambia for its hospitality this week, and for the tremendous job it has done in preparing this Fourth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. It is a great pleasure to be here in Lusaka, and it is an honour to deliver this opening statement before such a distinguished audience.

Over the years Zambia has been described as a peaceful island in a sea of armed struggle. Zambia has in the past witnessed war-inflicted human suffering and seen the severe drain on resources resulting both from armed conflicts in the region and from clearing of land littered with explosive remnants of war, including in its border areas. We truly recognise Zambia's role in mobilising African states behind the prohibition of weapons that cause unacceptable harm and jeopardise human development.

In December this year, five years will have passed since the Convention on Cluster Munitions was opened for signature. During these years, 112 states have signed the Convention, and at the time of this meeting there are 83 States Parties. Although, of course, we would like to see an even greater number of states joining the Convention, our assessment so far is that the rate of signature and ratification is rather impressive. By the standards of international law-making, and especially in the realm of disarmament, the

Convention stands out in several ways, due to its rapid negotiation and adoption, its rapid entry into force and its rapid acceptance as the standard to which all members of the international community will be held.

The first few years of the Convention have been extraordinarily successful. The use of cluster munitions has practically stopped, larger quantities than expected of stockpiles have been destroyed and the international market for munitions of this kind has virtually disappeared. Together, we have stigmatised cluster munitions to the extent that no state can be indifferent to the norms established by the Convention on Cluster Munitions. And as a result, any use of cluster munitions today is generally considered unacceptable, illegal and unbecoming of responsible members of the international community.

When reflecting on this achievement, it is worth remembering that prior to the adoption of the Convention in 2008, the vast majority of states considered cluster munitions to be legitimate weapons. Indeed, many of those states held stockpiles and many envisaged a central role for cluster munitions in their national defence strategies. Having turned these attitudes around, we have made impressive strides towards strengthening the protection of civilians and preventing unnecessary and unacceptable harm. Moreover, we have demonstrated that states, international organisations and civil society can make real progress when working together – even in the field of disarmament, when considerable resources are required, and sensitive issues relating to national security are involved.

Attracting universal adherence to the Convention on Cluster Munitions is an important objective and obligation, and I thank the Government of Zambia for drawing special attention to this issue. Development of international law is important as it changes the behaviour of states and affects outcomes. The greatest achievement of this Convention is that its adoption five years ago led to an immediate and dramatic reduction in the use of cluster munitions worldwide. Much human suffering has, as a result, been averted.

Over the past year, however, we have witnessed the first instance of intended and sustained use of these weapons since the Convention was adopted in 2008. As President of the Third Meeting of States Parties, I have repeatedly condemned the use of cluster munitions in the Syrian Arab Republic. While first and foremost a tragedy for the

affected civilian population, the use of cluster munitions in this conflict is also incompatible with the norms established by this Convention. I am therefore encouraged by the great number of states that have stood up for the Convention over the past year, expressly condemning the use of cluster munitions in the Syrian Arab Republic. Such reactions underscore the global support enjoyed by the Convention on Cluster Munitions and reflect the strength of the norm that has been established, despite the unacceptable actions that have taken place in the ongoing Syrian conflict.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Tomorrow we will gather for the formal opening of the first Meeting of States Parties to the Convention to take place in Africa. It would therefore be amiss not to pay tribute to the crucial role played by African states, including Zambia, in the process that led to the adoption of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The Livingstone Conference on Cluster Munitions, which was convened by Zambia in 2008, was a critical moment in the “Oslo Process”. It helped generate momentum and support for the subsequent negotiations in Dublin, and brought to the fore the voices and experiences of affected countries.

In closing, let me take this opportunity to congratulate Zambia for hosting the Fourth Meeting of States Parties. Zambia has actively supported the Convention on Cluster Munitions since well before its adoption, and I am confident that under the able leadership of the Honourable Mr Simuusa, Zambia will successfully guide us through this week’s meeting and the intersessional work programme in the coming year.

I wish you all a productive 4MSP.

Thank you.