

Opening Ceremony Address
Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions
San José, 1 September 2013



*Delivered on behalf of the Cluster Munition Coalition by Jesús Martínez
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Excellences, Dear Colleagues and Friends,

On behalf of the Cluster Munition Coalition I would like to thank Costa Rica for its leadership in hosting this meeting, and for making us feel warmly welcome. As a citizen from El Salvador I am happy that the Fifth Meeting of States Parties is held in Central America. This shows that even a region that is not directly affected by cluster munitions can work actively on their elimination.

Eliminating cluster munitions and working to heal the consequences of their use is what brings us together this week. There is no better way to meet these goals than by bringing all states on board the Convention on Cluster Munitions and making sure it is fully respected. We have already heard much good news on stockpile destruction, and hope to learn this week about further progress on all other Convention duties. I would like to offer three thoughts about this.

First, expanding membership of the Convention is clearly in our collective interest because with every new State Party we strengthen the norm against these horrid weapons and decrease the likelihood that they will be used again. We call on all States Parties to use every possible occasion to tell non-signatories to join without further delay, and to ask signatories to make ratification their top priority.

We thank those states that have been reaching out to their neighbors and across the world, including Zambia as outgoing President, and Costa Rica. We trust that Costa Rica will continue to do so throughout its presidency. We also collectively need to do much more if we are to see real progress on universalization by the First Review Conference.

Second, we are tremendously concerned that cluster munitions continue to be used systematically in Syria, and have also been used recently in South Sudan and Ukraine. Let's not sit silently in the face of ongoing use of a weapon you have banned. Any use must be condemned as loud as the explosions of these deadly weapons. Dear delegates, there is nothing more powerful than your country's voice when it comes to upholding the norm created by the convention. Please make sure, here this week and back at home, to publicly condemn the use of cluster munitions in Syria, Ukraine and South Sudan. Speaking up is essential, even if you have already condemned such use in the past. It is your legal duty, and your moral duty.

And finally, survivors around the world will not tire calling on you to move beyond the talk, to concrete actions that will guarantee our rights. I myself have lived through the pain caused by an indiscriminate weapon – I survived a landmine explosion that cut my legs when I was 17, and I continue living with social discrimination and physical barriers. I am also a witness to the violation of the fundamental rights of survivors and other persons with disabilities. This cannot be allowed to continue without any improvement based on the argument that affected countries are poor. The Convention on Cluster Munitions has groundbreaking provisions on victim assistance that have raised high hopes among survivors, their families, and communities. Immediate efforts are needed to meet these hopes.

Excellences, dear delegates -- the CMC, firmly believes that we *can* stop cluster munitions, that we *must* stop cluster munitions before there are any more casualties. This meeting will help bring us closer to this goal. I wish you an excellent Fifth Meeting of States Parties.