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Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions

2st - 5th September 2014, San José

General exchange of views

Statement delivered by Ambassador Stefano Toscano, Director, Geneva International
Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)

Mr. President,
Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me warmly thank the Government of Costa Rica for its leadership in organizing and chairing the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Four years have passed since the entry into force of the Convention and next year will mark a major milestone in our common efforts to put an end to the suffering from cluster munitions with the Convention's First Review Conference. As the sole international instrument on cluster munitions, the Convention has succeeded, in a relatively short time, in strengthening the norm against the use of cluster munitions and in stigmatizing it globally.

Through the Vientiane Action Plan adopted in 2010, States Parties made significant commitments to ensure that the Convention can have immediate impact for the people. Many of these commitments have translated into concrete achievements in the past four years. The number of States Parties to the Convention has grown rapidly. States Parties and signatories are implementing the Convention's obligations with vigor and determination, and most States not party to the Convention adhere to its main provisions. The rare use of cluster munitions by States which have not joined the Convention has been condemned widely.

Efforts to improve the land release approach and the overall productivity of survey and clearance operations are underway through, for instance, the adoption of amended International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) and the development of innovative survey and clearance methodologies. In addition, impressive accomplishments have been witnessed with regard to stockpile destruction. All States Parties with cluster munitions stockpiles have

confirmed their commitment to complete the destruction within the eight-year deadline required by the Convention and some major stockpilers have already or will shortly complete their stockpile destruction – years in advance of the deadline.

Despite the success of the Convention, there remain significant challenges to be addressed.

First, we have to keep a strong focus on the timely implementation of the core obligations of the Convention.

Second, the rate of new States joining the Convention over the last two years has decreased significantly - a cause of concern considering that relevance and impact of the Convention depend, among others, on its universality.

Third, many countries still struggle to determine the extent of the contamination. The latter, however, is crucial to achieve the goals set forth by the Convention. Further efforts are needed in that regard, including :

- better operational planning
- improvements in the level of training of non-technical survey teams
- more precise targeting of technical survey and clearance resources
- improvements of information management services

We will address these issues more in details in our statement under clearance, as well as during a side-event.

I would like to conclude by wishing us all a fruitful Meeting in the coming days. The GICHD looks forward to continuing working with all of you towards our common goals.

Thank you.