



# ICRC

**ICRC Statement on Universalization  
Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions  
San Jose, Costa Rica, 2-5 September 2014**

The ICRC would like to begin by congratulating Belize and the Republic of the Congo for the announcements that they have joined the Convention and the deposit of their instruments of ratification. This is welcome news. We also congratulate Saint Kitts and Nevis for having joined in 2013. Also and particularly welcome news is Central America's status as a region free of cluster munitions.

Yet, despite these welcome developments, the ICRC is concerned that the pace of ratifications has slowed in recent years and like others who have spoken we would like to see that pace quicken significantly. We hope that the ratifications announced yesterday and the statements made by other countries that their internal processes are well underway are the start of reversing this trend. Over the past 2 years we have focused a particular effort on urging signatory States to ratify the Convention. Many signed more than 5 years ago and since then have affirmed their support for the Convention's humanitarian goals. We take this opportunity to again urge them to follow the example of Belize, Rep Congo and St Kitts and Nevis and take the necessary steps to join the Convention as soon as possible. Ratifying the Convention this year will not only help reinforce the important prohibitions and norms that this Convention is establishing, it will also allow these States to fully participate as State Parties at next year's review conference and contribute to the decisions and actions taken by that meeting.

The ICRC would like to take this opportunity to thank those States Parties that have worked to promote universal adherence to the Convention. In particular, we wish to salute the active engagement of Zambia, as president over the last year, Ghana and Norway as coordinators on universalization as well as New Zealand, Chile and UNDP for their efforts. We were pleased to participate in the 4 workshops that were organized to promote the Convention amongst signatory States from Africa, the Middle East and for Latin America. We very much support this small group approach to help advance the discussions in signatory countries. ICRC delegations have used these meetings to engage States in follow-up discussions at the national level.

The reports of the use of cluster munitions in Syria, South Sudan and the Ukraine are a serious concern, a concern which is shared by the ICRC. These weapons were prohibited because of the severe humanitarian consequences they have on civilian populations. The large number of States speaking out in response to such use sends a clear signal that use by any country or armed group is unacceptable. This stigmatization effect plays an important role in IHL and while it may not address the damage that has been done already, we do know from past experience that such stigmatization can restrain use in the future.

The fact that cluster munitions continue to be used shows that there is still work to be done. We must double our efforts to encourage all States to join the Convention if they have not already done so. As CMC has said this morning, we can all do more. The list proposed by Ecuador is a good basis for further action. For some States, adherence in the short-term is unlikely but we are confident that our efforts on universalization combined with a strong message of stigmatization will have an impact on many States, including those which still possess cluster munitions and bring them to join this important treaty.

Thank you.