

Ireland
Universalisation
5th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions
3rd September 2014

Mr. President,

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you on your election and to offer you the full support of my delegation as you lead us through our meeting this week and in the run up to the First Review Conference next year. Likewise, I wish to congratulate your predecessor, H.E Wylbur Simuusa Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Zambia and the entire Zambian team, for their activities as Presidency over the past year.

Ireland aligns itself with the statement delivered yesterday on behalf of the EU.

Mr. President, last month we celebrated the 150th anniversary of the signing of the first Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field. As the President of the Swiss Confederation and the President of the International Red Cross noted in their article, published across the globe to mark the event that Convention enshrined “the idea in international law that even in times of war, a certain degree of humanity must be preserved.”

In the one hundred and fifty years since that first Geneva Convention, the body of international humanitarian law has been significantly expanded. Regrettably, so also has the variety of instruments of war available. The Convention on Cluster Munitions is a significant demonstration of the will of States to address the long-term impact of weapons use on civilian populations and has embedded a renewed

sense of responsibility in our approach to considering disarmament issues. The preamble to the Convention demonstrates the collective determination of States Parties “to put an end for all time to the suffering and casualties caused by cluster munitions at the time of their use, when they fail to function as intended or when they are abandoned.”

I wish to express Ireland’s thanks to the coordinators on Universalisation, Ghana and Norway, for the work which they have undertaken on this most important issue. We commend in particular the steps undertaken by the coordinators and the Zambian Presidency to engage states who are not party to the Convention. We also congratulate and welcome Belize and the Republic of the Congo.

Mr. President,

Universalisation remains a central challenge for the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The success of our Convention in gathering 85 States Parties is an excellent start. This impressive level of adherence combined with the unarguable stigmatisation impact of the Convention has helped to reduce substantially the level of cluster munition use in armed conflict. However if we are to achieve the objectives set out in the Convention we must continue to broaden adherence to the Convention. We are agreed in this forum that we are establishing a new norm in international humanitarian law and the establishment of such a norm naturally implies aiming for universal acceptance of that norm.

As we move towards the milestone of the 1st Review Conference in 2015 we need to recognise that despite considerable progress in the implementation of the Convention the number of States Parties has plateaued in recent years, particularly in terms of states that stockpile, produce and use cluster munitions. In advancing the process of universalisation we need to address a number of different constituencies. Firstly we need to encourage and assist the remaining signatories who have yet to ratify the convention. Secondly we should

continue to promote the accession of states that do not possess cluster munitions and are not affected by cluster munition remnants, by emphasising the importance of universalisation in ending the unacceptable harm arising from cluster munition use. Thirdly we need to engage energetically with the 48 states who are not party and who continue to possess these weapons. We need to focus in particular on a number of regions where a number of factors among them security tensions have served to discourage adherence including in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and in South and East Asia. We need to persuade those who stockpile or produce cluster munitions, of the benefits of adhering to the Convention.

The use of cluster munitions this year in armed conflicts on three continents, demonstrates the vital importance of working to broaden adherence to our Convention. Mr. President, I must express Ireland's condemnation of the ongoing use of cluster munitions by and in Syria. Equally, we are deeply concerned about reports of use in Ukraine and in South Sudan. We call upon all states and non-state actors to refrain from using these weapons. We call upon all States to join this Convention.

Mr. President,

We need to widen as well as deepen the impact of the convention and we will look forward to fruitful discussions and initiatives on universalisation in the run-up to the Review Conference.

Nationally, Ireland will continue to advocate for greater adherence through bilateral contacts with non-states parties as well as through the opportunities provided by multi-lateral conferences in a variety of forums. We will continue to do this, even when not successful, as it is vital to maintain these channels of communication.

Ireland looks forward to making additional contributions to our discussions over the coming days, Mr. President, and I will conclude by once again offering you our congratulations and the assurance of our

commitment to working with you to bring this Meeting to a successful conclusion.

Thank you.