



ICRC

**Seventh Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions
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Geneva, Switzerland**

**Address by Dr Helen Durham
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Mr President, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Convention on Cluster Munitions continues to be a remarkable success. As we have heard, millions of explosive submunitions have been destroyed, hundreds of square kilometres of land have been cleared of cluster munition remnants and concerted efforts have helped improve the lives of victims. As the Director of International Law and Policy at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), I am regularly asked if international humanitarian law is still relevant today; whether it can do anything to mitigate the suffering caused by armed conflict, horrifying in so many instances. I often cite the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in response.

But the progress achieved thus far, though consequential, must not be cause for complacency. Here in Geneva, the grievous harm caused by cluster munitions may seem a distant reality. But in many countries, civilians have to cope every day with the threat of injury or death posed by these weapons. There have been reports of cluster munitions being used in several ongoing armed conflicts and 2016 saw an increase in the number of new casualties. This is a matter of grave concern: we believe that any use of cluster munitions is unacceptable. The States party to this treaty must continue to show strong leadership against any use of cluster munitions, and must maintain the energy and commitment needed to rid the world of these weapons.

To realize this objective of a world free of cluster munitions, all States must first stop using these weapons and become party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The Dubrovnik Action Plan aspires to have 130 States Parties by the Second Review Conference, which is three years away. There are 102 States Parties at present: much therefore remains to be done to meet the Action Plan's goal. Benin and Madagascar have joined the treaty since the last meeting of States Parties, and we congratulate and welcome them.

The adherence of all States to the Convention on Cluster Munitions is an important goal for the ICRC, and we continue to call on all States that have not yet joined the treaty to do so as soon as possible.

To States that have signed but not yet ratified the Convention, we say, “Now is the time.” Nearly 10 years have passed since its adoption and 7 since its entry into force. Most signatory States do not possess cluster munitions and are not affected by cluster munition remnants. By becoming a State Party you would reinforce the stigmatization of cluster munitions and the norms of the Convention. It would be wonderful to be able to welcome you as full States Parties when we mark the 10th anniversary of the Convention in May of next year.

There are States whose militaries are hesitant to give up cluster munitions for reasons of national security; we call on you to reconsider your views. The humanitarian consequences of cluster munitions are well known and it is widely accepted that the weapon’s unreliability limits its military usefulness. Some States that currently possess cluster munitions have expressed an interest in the Convention and are discussing the implications of joining. We urge you to intensify your deliberations so that you can join the treaty sooner rather than later.

Mr President, the ICRC would like to commend you, your team and the Implementation Support Unit for all the work done this year to help universalize the Convention. For its part, the ICRC will continue to promote the Convention, including through regional and national events to inform the public and decision-makers.

Of course, the prospects for universalization are enhanced when policies and programmes are available to help States Parties implement their obligations under the Convention. Provision of assistance and cooperation under the Convention must remain vigorous. And that can happen only by sustaining the supply of the resources necessary. The ‘country coalition approach’ developed by the Presidency could become an important tool in this regard. Besides furthering the implementation of the Convention by States Parties, this approach may also help advance adherence to the Convention by non-party States.

In closing, the ICRC would like to voice its support for the efforts to develop greater synergies between this Convention, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War. These instruments have a common goal: to help end the suffering caused by weapons that can’t stop killing even after a conflict has ended. Enabling them to work together more closely will only amplify their impact.

Thank you.