

7th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions

Statement by Ireland

Intervention on International Cooperation and Assistance

Thank you, Mr President, and as the first time Ireland has taken the floor at this meeting, may I congratulate you on your Presidency and wish you every success. May I also congratulate the work of the Co-ordinators Australia and Iraq for their hard work on International Cooperation and Assistance.

I would like to align Ireland with the Statement delivered by the European Union, and will add the following in our national capacity, to provide our meeting with a short summary of Ireland's cooperation and assistance program for humanitarian de-mining, including for the clearing of cluster munition remnants.

Ireland's humanitarian mine action programmes are directly linked to supporting Ireland's commitments under the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the APLC, and Protocol V of the CCW. Our Humanitarian Assistance Policy, launched in 2015, also emphasises the links between humanitarian de-mining and development, opening up access to land for economic development as well as opening up access to services, in addition to providing education and employment opportunities. We regard humanitarian de-mining as an essential contribution to strengthening resilience in situations of fragility.

Irish Aid has given over €38 million to humanitarian mine action since 2006. The focus of our program for 2016/17 is in line with these priorities through the provision of support to Halo Trust and other partners. In 2016 alone over €1 million was allocated by our Embassy in Hanoi to projects in Cambodia, the Lao PDR, Vietnam and Myanmar. A further €2 million was distributed to projects in Afghanistan, Somalia, and Zimbabwe. Halo Trust now estimate that nearly 80% of the land cleared in Afghanistan is being used for agriculture and grazing. As well as clearance of contaminated ground, Irish Aid funding is also being used to support a substantial risk education programme within the affected communities.

Ireland has also been pleased to support the work of Slovenia's ITF, with a grant last year to support de-mining projects in Ukraine and this year for de-mining activities and capacity building projects in Colombia, aiming to strengthen the Colombian Directorate for Comprehensive Mine Action. We believe that the work of ITF over the past 19 years has been of great benefit to

people impacted by mine action and we share many of ITF's policy approaches with regard to de-mining and conflict resolution. We welcome the technical support that ITF applies all around the globe, providing much needed relief in precarious situations, and we are supportive in particular of the capacity building aspects of ITF operations and its commitment to the promotion of gender equality across the organisation and programme work.

I would also draw some attention to the challenges facing our Convention. As we gather here to discuss our cooperation in clearance and victim assistance, new areas are being contaminated and new victims are suffering from the use of these inaccurate, inhumane weapons in ongoing conflicts. Ireland would like to reiterate our condemnation of their use in Syria and Yemen as well as our concern at other such reports of use. We again call on all concerned to refrain from using these indiscriminate weapons. I would also reiterate a more general concern here at the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas. The civilian casualties and massive infrastructure damage from such use is a matter of urgent concern for the international community.

In terms of adherence to the Convention, there is some very encouraging news to note - We warmly welcome South Sudan's accession to the CCM and APLC, announced earlier this morning; we welcome CCM new members Benin and Madagascar; and we were pleased yesterday to hear Sri Lanka speak on their plans to join. We call upon those states that have not yet done so, to commence the process of adhering to the Convention. Ireland will continue our support and outreach on universalisation in our bilateral contacts with non-State Parties, for today we can see the power of normative action and of stigmatising these weapons.

This year we are also contributing to a de-mining project in Palau, focusing on clearing newly discovered mines which were planted during The Second World War, as Ireland remains committed to helping States meet their Convention obligations and deal with the long-term difficulty of clearing stockpiles.

Yesterday we listened to the news that Mozambique has fulfilled its Article 4 stockpile clearance obligations ahead of schedule. We must take heart in the progress being shared during this meeting, and use it to strengthen our resolve in ensuring that devastating harm can no longer be inflicted by these 'tools of silent war and death' - as the esteemed Ambassador from Mozambique so-called them yesterday.

Thank you Mr President.

