

2012 Inter-sessional Meeting of the Convention on Cluster Munitions

Statement of the International Committee of the Red Cross on Universalization

16 April 2012

On behalf of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), let me begin by congratulating Portugal for assuming the role of co-coordinator on universalization and Japan for its continued work and commitment in this area. Like others, the ICRC is pleased that the number of States joining this fundamental humanitarian treaty continues to increase steadily. It demonstrates the international community's high level of engagement on the issue of cluster munitions and each ratification brings us closer to the eventual elimination of these weapons.

Achieving the universalisation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions is one of the priorities of the ICRC and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement more generally. As some of you may recall, in 2009 the ICRC, together with the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and their International Federation, adopted a Strategy on Landmines, Cluster Munitions and Other Explosive Remnants of War. This strategy identifies how the Movement can engage to prevent accidents and reduce the effects of weapons contamination when it occurs. It also highlights that the goal of protecting civilians from the consequences of armed conflict will be reached only when international norms, such as the Convention on Cluster Munitions, are universally accepted and implemented by armed forces and non-State armed groups. In this regard, the strategy identifies universal adherence of the Convention on Cluster Munitions as one of the Movement's principal goals.

Since that time the ICRC and the other components of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement have pursued efforts to promote the Convention. In 2011, the Convention was on the agenda of a number of events including an ICRC-hosted meeting on IHL issues for States of South Asia, a conference on IHL for all Commonwealth States and their National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, a meeting of Commonwealth Law Ministers and the annual IHL meeting for States of Southern Africa. The ICRC also urged adherence to the Convention in bilateral contacts with signatories and non-signatory States and provided technical support to a number of National Societies carrying out these implementation activities themselves. Similar efforts are underway in 2012 with a particular focus on increasing adherence in Africa and South-east Asia. The ICRC looks forward to the upcoming meeting in Accra, Ghana to promote universalization among the States of sub-Saharan Africa and the technical workshop for Arab States announced here this morning.

Mr Co-coordinators, it goes without saying that the international environment on cluster munitions has changed dramatically. Weapons that just were once considered to be an important, and even essential, part of the military arsenal of some States have been increasingly renounced due to their high humanitarian costs. As we have already heard this morning, the number of States joining the Convention on Cluster Munitions continues to increase. As a result, the norm against these weapons strengthens. In addition, as a direct result of the Convention's obligations, more than 68 million cluster munitions have been destroyed, States Parties and signatories affected by these weapons have begun to develop plans for the survey and clearance of contaminated areas and measures have been taken to help ensure that the assistance promised to victims becomes a reality. The ICRC sees these developments as significant progress but recognizes that there remains much more to be done. The ICRC remains determined to work strenuously to promote the universalization of

the Convention and cooperate with all relevant actors to pave the way towards the elimination of cluster munitions.

With this momentum and these achievements as a backdrop, the ICRC calls on States that have not yet ratified the Convention, including the 41 States that have signed the Convention but not yet ratified it, to adhere to the Convention as soon as possible and to help move us closer towards a world free of cluster munitions.

Thank you.