

Convention on Cluster Munitions: Intersessional Meeting, 16-19 April 2012

Closure of the Meeting

Closing remarks by Ambassador Najla Riachi Assaker

I would like to first say that it has been a great honour to oversee the course of deliberations amongst such a broad range of participants. We have observed an excellent level of participation this week, with a total number of 358 delegates in attendance, representing 76 States and 25 international organizations.

Within this number, we have observed 44 States Parties, 22 signatories to the Convention and 10 other states, demonstrating a wide and varied community of states that continues to provide valuable and constructive input into the work of this Convention.

I thank you for your engagement in this process, and in particular to those who have yet to accede or ratify, I would like to reiterate that the Presidency, along with the Coordinators, stand ready to assist you in addressing any challenges that may currently be faced in joining the CCM, so as to enable accession as soon as possible.

It is a pleasure to see that the prohibitive norm that sits at the foundation of this Convention continues to gain recognition as a necessary humanitarian commitment for all, not only those affected by the weapon. The level of engagement in this meeting and other related to the Convention, even outside of the treaty membership, reassures me that the future of the CCM looks very positive indeed. I am therefore further convinced of the need to perform my role as President in a manner that accurately serves the interests of all stakeholders, at a crucial moment in the life of this young Convention.

During the week, I have been much out of the plenary room, undertaking consultations to gain a better picture of the views of states on matters pertaining, in particular, the mandate given to me in Beirut. I have checked back with all Coordinators to hear of the progress recorded in their respective sessions and I am very confident of the status of work in the very capable hands of the Coordinators, as I am sure you will agree.

As such, they have informed me of the extremely productive discussions of the week. Based on their feedback, I would like to provide you all with a few summarizing comments on the sessions that have taken place.

During the session on **Universalization**, delegates received a comprehensive update from CMC, indicating to us all that progress has been made, yet much remains to be done. With that in mind, Portugal and Japan, as Co-coordinators for Universalization, will jointly approach States not party to the convention, inviting them to join the Convention. They will also pursue the activities of the Universalization Team, as reported in the course of this session. We would like to encourage all States Parties, regional organizations and civil society, to continue to be actively

engaged in the promotion of the CCM. As the Coordinators have stressed, Universalization is a shared commitment and for States Parties, indeed an obligation that needs to be sustained over the years to come. Hopefully, when we meet again in Oslo, in September, we will be able to report that additional States have joined the CCM and more are about to join. The Coordinators also welcomed the support expressed by Norway to events in support of universalization activities in the future.

During the session on **Clearance and risk reduction** we had six excellent presentations from operators working on clearance of cluster munition remnants in a diverse range of areas - South East Europe, Western Sahara, Laos and Lebanon.

The very informative national presentations from Lebanon and Croatia and updates from other affected States provided us with further evidence of the significant progress that is being achieved in clearance. The Joint Coordinators consider that this has demonstrated that clearance of cluster munitions remnants can be achieved and in many cases is being achieved more quickly than might have been expected.

These presentations and interventions have provided excellent material for the Oslo Progress Report. Additionally the Joint Coordinators intend to produce a Working Paper to be presented in Oslo where they will outline the steps that have been taken to increase efficiency in clearance methodologies and the techniques employed.

The session on **Stockpile destruction and retention** was as all sessions, very well attended, confirming the commitment of both States Parties and signatory States to the disarmament objectives of the Convention.

The declaration of completion by Bosnia and Herzegovina is just another success story that we have heard during ongoing deliberations on the CCM, and progress reported by others confirms a continuing dynamic trend as more and more States address their stockpile challenges in order to comply with Article 3, well in advance of the deadlines that have been set out. And indeed, the very strong support to the norm set by the convention as even those states that are not yet parties to the Convention report on plans and activities on stockpile destruction.

From what the Coordinators report, it is clear that financial and technical challenges do exist, nonetheless it should be stressed that these challenges are the very reason why we speak of **International Cooperation and Assistance**. As this is an obligation for all States Parties under Article 6, I would like to emphasize that the CCM provides an excellent platform for all States present, both Signatories and Non-Signatories, to address these challenges and therefore realize compliance with the provisions set out in the treaty text.

This includes also **Victim assistance** and regrettably we learned that once clearance obligations have been met, there appears to be a tendency of cooperation and assistance tapering out, leaving states with other operative obligations to fulfill with delays caused by gaps in their ability to

address these needs. As the Coordinators on Victim Assistance have informed me, their session went very well. The format used was considered a success, as it allowed the audience to easily follow the different presentations. The direction taken by the Coordinators throughout the second portion of the session was particularly positive in my view, given the fact that comments further pronounced the idea that victim assistance must ultimately be considered as a human rights issue. With this in mind, I very much hope that discussions will continue to address this fundamental issue, particularly when we all meet again at the 3MSP in Oslo.

The session on **Transparency Reporting** provided some very informative and interesting updates on where States currently stand in relation to their Article 7 obligations, as well as the work that the Coordinator is currently undergoing to explore possible areas where reporting could be more comprehensive and easier to achieve.

In 2011, 42 States submitted their Article 7 reports, including 3 voluntary submissions. Further to this, 13 initial reports are expected from States Parties that have ratified or acceded to the Convention over the past year. This year we have received 7 reports so far. Whilst it is encouraging to note that these States are fulfilling their obligations well in advance of the deadline, I encourage information sharing from all States Parties, and I take this opportunity to remind you all that the 30 April deadline is fast approaching.

On **National Implementation Measures**, several delegations provided their first updates of progress in national implementation measures and some states have yet to report as their initial Article 7 report is only shortly due. We heard the CMC note that better progress could and indeed should have been made but we remain optimistic awaiting further progress reported in Oslo this fall.

In closing, I would like to thank All states and partners for their active participation throughout this week; it is our hope that in these four intensive days we managed to live up to your expectations. I would also like to express my gratitude to the members of the Coordination Committee for their relentless support to the Presidency, as well as for their much appreciated work in steering our thematic discussions and the preparation thereto. A warm thanks of appreciation also to the Troika members, Lao PDR as the former President and Norway in their capacity as President-designate to the 3MSP for their support and availability throughout my presidency.

My sincere appreciation goes to Mme Sara Sekkenes and her team, for their invaluable support to the Presidency in preparing for the intersessional meeting and, as always, for their hard work throughout this week. I must also thank the GICHD for the effective collaboration with the UNDP in the organization of this meeting as well as with the sponsorship programme. To that end, as a token of my appreciation, I would like to hand you all a little sign of spring, despite this week's appeared return to winter temperatures.

Last but certainly not least, I would like to thank the interpreters and the staff at the WMO for their assistance this week. We look forward to Oslo, but before that, rest assured that my team stands ready to engage with you on any aspect of the discussions we had this week. As mentioned earlier, I do foresee more informal consultation on the way ahead, which we will inform you about in due course.

With this, I wish those of you who have come from abroad a safe travel back home, with the hope to meet again in Oslo later this year and to all, the wish for a beautiful and restful weekend.

I hereby declare the meeting closed.