

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

Opening of the Meeting

Opening Address by Secretary-General Ambassador Wafik Rhaimé

Excellencies, distinguished colleagues, and friends of the Convention on Cluster Munitions,

Allow me at the outset, and on behalf of the President of the Second Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention H.E. Dr. Adnan Mansour, to welcome you to this intersessional meeting of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

I am privileged and honored to have this chance in addressing this informal but very important meeting, and my presence here today is a vivid demonstration of the importance my government attaches to your work.

This course is a continuation of our commitment to the values and principles of International Humanitarian Law upon which this Convention stands and to which it contributes and strengthens.

First and foremost, I would like to thank all those States who so clearly subscribe to the humanitarian imperatives of the Convention. This was evident at the Second Meeting of States Parties in which you have honored us by hosting and presiding over, with [131] states present, including 18 Arab States. We were extremely delighted to learn you were satisfied by the proceedings in Beirut, and to reassure you once again, we undertake our mandate seriously, and we have worked hard to carry out the tasks presented to us. We now wish to hand over the baton to the next President rested assured that the Convention is put under his wings in a good and growing shape.

Distinguished colleagues,

It is now seven months since we last met in Beirut and much has happened since then.

- Seven States have joined the Convention and our collective endeavor. I would like to congratulate and warmly welcome the Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Italy, Trinidad and Tobago, Cote d'Ivoire, Honduras, Mauritania, in addition to Swaziland which deposited their instrument of ratification during the 2 MSP in Beirut, on September 13, 2011.
- Although delighted by this, we believe our efforts can further strengthen to promote the universalization of this Convention. We maintain that, as the only normative framework that exists on this issue, the CCM can realize universal adherence as a result of our collective efforts. Universal adherence to the Convention is our goal and we look forward

to additional ratifications in advance of the Third Meeting of States Parties, scheduled for 11-14 September in Oslo.

- We remain alerted by concerns raised over alleged use of cluster munitions in the period since the 2MSP; such allegations need to be clarified. As a State party to the Convention and as President of the 2MSP, I feel compelled to take such notes seriously. Our collective determination to protect civilian lives and livelihoods from unacceptable harm asks nothing less of us and we must at all times remember the humanitarian imperative that drove us to ban cluster munitions. It is in line with a core commitment of the treaty and such responses are important for the integrity of this young Convention.
- Since Beirut, we have also worked with States, and coordinators that have taken upon themselves to lead the coordination of and work on the Intersessional Programme of Work and the thematic follow-up of the commitments we collectively made at the First Meeting of States Parties, enshrined in the 66 Actions of the Vientiane Action Plan.
- We look forward to hearing from your delegations on progress in stockpile destructions, in clearing cluster munitions remnants and in assisting survivors, and on how we together can work to constantly improve how we cooperate with and assist each other in these tasks to accelerate the implementation of the Convention.
- We will also discuss reporting obligations and national implementation measures that States have pursued to ensure that progress is captured and transparency upheld and that the Convention is firmly encoded in domestic law.
- These and all other advancements will be captured in the Oslo Progress Report, a document which aims at monitoring the progress in implementing the Vientiane Action Plan from the Second up to the Third Meeting of States Parties. It is our hope that our collective efforts will guide us and also hold us accountable to the commitments we made in Vientiane.

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Ladies and gentlemen,

The main objective of this meeting, as you will be aware, is for us to informally review the status of implementation and to discuss how we, as States Parties and Friends of this Convention can work to advance the implementation and universalization of the CCM. This meeting is, as we all know, informal and not a forum in which we can or will take any decision. It is my hope however, that we can share our views, learn more and gauge where we stand to inform the way ahead.

I encourage delegations to engage in the discussions over the coming days, share your views and talk frankly of our efforts to comply with the Convention, and in the planning and organisation of the programme of work, to ensure progress and fruitful discussions at the Third Meeting of States Parties.

The intersessionals continue to provide an optimal informal opportunity for all partners to deliberate on matters relevant to both the implementation and the universalization of the CCM.

1 – It is an opportunity for us to review all the initiatives we have taken to move "from concept into action", to look at the actions taken to date in connection with the implementation of the Action Plan adopted at Vientiane and measure progress to this end so that we arrive at the 1st Review Conference looking back on all the results we have achieved.

In Vientiane, we set an ultimate goal: to put an end to the suffering caused by cluster munitions. Today, where do we find ourselves vis-à-vis these actions that we committed ourselves to undertake? What have we done to address the challenges that hinder the achievement of the objectives of the Convention? Have we managed to meet the deadlines we have set ourselves?

2 - The importance of this meeting is also because it is a forum, to share our information and expertise and to share our experiences and concerns, so as to ensure practical implementation of the various provisions of the Convention.

3 - At another level, today's meeting makes us take stock of the efforts of individual governments to provide assistance to countries affected by this scourge and we ask to what extent we have managed to encourage other states to join us, especially since we are all committed to ensure widespread adherence to the Convention.

In the context of this intersessional meeting, but also with respect to the meeting in Beirut, I would like to seize this opportunity to thank you for your presence and to express that we greatly value your contributions to this process. Our discussions would not take this shape and go into great depth without all the preparatory work undertaken by the Coordinators and the Coordination Committee. Each, in their chosen topic, focused on the challenges ahead and the progress already palpable. They will share with you, with us, the results of this work, and I would like to thank you all for enriching the debate further, for providing the clarifications needed and the suggested ways forward in the areas of your concern.

The highlight of this process has always been the spirit of partnership that encapsulates the work and collaboration between States, the United Nations, the ICRC, civil society in general and the Cluster Munition Coalition in particular. I call on you to nurture, maintain and further strengthen this notion of partnerships which has proven effective, cultivating efficient cooperation as captured in our collective commitment of Action 1 of the Vientiane Action Plan.

This spirit of openness, coordination, transparency, sharing and community, which has prevailed among you, we hope to find it with our partners who will be officially appointed at our next meeting in Oslo.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the former President, Lao PDR, again for all their efforts and for the excellent organization of the First Meeting of States Parties, and also for steering our work last year. I also look forward to the Third Meeting of States Parties and I congratulate Norway with the appointment of President-designate and wish you all the best in hosting the Third Meeting of States Parties and Ambassador Steffen Kongstad in particular for having been nominated to preside over it. We are entirely confident that with your able leadership, and all that you have done for the Convention to see the light of day, the Convention will expand its scope and gain in important dimensions.

Lebanon also notes with appreciation the dedication and professionalism of the Executive Coordinator of the President, Mrs. Sara Sekkenes. To her and her team, I extend my heartfelt encouragement to go always in the same direction.

I must also extend my appreciation to the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, director and staff, for the services and support you provided to the organization of this very meeting.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During this intense week of meetings ahead of you, you'll be able to discuss substantive and thematic issues that challenge us, particularly those relating to the clearance of contaminated areas, victim assistance and stockpile destruction. You will also discuss the implementation support unit and means of coordinating work under the related agreement with States Parties, and future intersessional work.

We place great importance on the results of your work which would lead to recommendations for the consideration of States Parties at the Third Meeting of States Parties, so that together, we can ensure the safety and security of future generations and help improve the lives of those already affected, as the motto we set ourselves at the 2MSP in Beirut last year, we work "Together for a Safer life".

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Distinguished colleagues and friends,

Victims, survivors and their families and communities are at the very heart of this process. Many of them have become close friends of us, and I would like to thank them for their continued commitment and presence; I particularly thank those who have decided to come to this very

meeting, and to whom I extend my sincere and heartfelt appreciation. Your participation has been crucial in reminding us of our priorities and to help us focus our work on the real needs and challenges that exist. No one knows better than you what the effects of cluster munitions are, and of measuring how we live up to the commitments we as States Parties to this Convention have made, reminding us of the imperative of the preventive clauses and non-proliferation; stockpile destruction and prohibition of production, transfer and use. You are the litmus test of the success of this undertaking. Therefore, I have asked Ms. Lynn Bradach to say a few words and I have the honor to give her the floor. You have the floor please.

[Ms Lynn Bradach delivers an address]

Thank you Ms Bradach. I share with you the grief of your loss and admire your persistence to make a difference. A world free of cluster munitions is a safer world.

Before we commence our work for the week, I would like to hand over to the Permanent Representative of Lebanon in Geneva Ambassador Najla Riachi Assaker to continue the proceedings of this week with you. I wish you again all the very best in your deliberations.

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Opening Address by Ambassador Najla Riachi Assaker

Thank you Mr. Secretary-General for these opening remarks and also for your personal commitment to this convention and to the process. I would also like to thank Ms. Lynn for her statement and to reassure you and other victims, that we share with you and all families and communities affected the grief of your losses, and I highly value your perseverance to make a difference.

Distinguished colleagues and friends, with your permission, I will now turn to the provisional programme of the week. But before that I will turn to the Executive Coordinator for some advice on how to best organise our work this week. Ms. Sara, you have the floor.....

[MS. SARA SEKKENES INTRODUCES HOUSE RULES]

Thank you, Sara. May I take the opportunity to second what the Secretary-General has stated, and again thank you and UNDP for your support during our Presidency. We have greatly appreciated how you and your team have assisted us in the work together with the Coordination Committee members.

May I also extend this gratitude to the entire Group of Coordinators and other friends of the Convention, some of which will assist in conducting the meeting this week, whilst others, we hope, will allow us to continue consulting them for their input throughout this week's proceedings. We are most grateful for the work being carried out by all of you.

I also have to thank the director and staff at the Geneva International Centre for humanitarian demining, for their excellent work in collaboration with UNDP on the sponsorship programme and also in the preparations for this meeting.

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You will all have received a draft programme including an annotation on how we aim to proceed in the coming days.

The thematic Coordinators have agreed to chair sessions pertaining to subject matters that they have helped coordinate, and here if I may invite the Holy See and Zambia to come to the podium to chair the following session pertaining to matters that relates to the general status and operation of the convention.

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