

2013 Inter-sessional Meeting of the Convention on Cluster Munitions

Statement of the International Committee of the Red Cross on Universalization

16 April 2013

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) would like to begin by congratulating Portugal and Ghana for their continued efforts and commitment as coordinators on universalization. We also would like to congratulate the 6 States that formally adhered to the Convention since the Third Meeting of States Parties in September 2013, namely Australia, Andorra, Chad, Lichtenstein, Nauru and Peru.

It is nearly 5 years since the Convention was adopted and the ICRC is generally pleased with the state of ratification. Eighty States are now a party to the instrument. However, it must be noted that pace of ratifications has slightly slowed over the past 2 years. This is not unexpected as many States were prepared to quickly adhere to the Convention when it was concluded in 2008. Other States, however, have required more time to understand and assess the Convention's provisions. The ICRC believes that it is time to re-double our efforts to universalize the Convention, and urges all States particularly, those 31 signatory States that have not yet ratified, to join the Convention as quickly as possible. Signatory States have already accepted the object and purpose of the Convention and the premise that cluster munitions are unacceptable weapons that should no longer be used. It is now time for them to put this commitment into action and take the final steps to ratify the instrument.

The adherence of all States to the Convention is a priority for the ICRC and we are working in many countries to promote its universalization. As we have outlined in previous inter-sessional meetings, the ICRC undertakes a wide range of promotional activities through its delegations and its support to National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. With the 4th Meeting of States Parties taking place this year in Zambia, we feel that this is a particularly important moment to engage signatory States in Africa. In this regard, we welcome the upcoming meeting on universalization being organized by Togo with the support of UNDP to promote adherence in the sub-Saharan region. For its part the ICRC will have sessions on the Convention as part of regional meetings on international humanitarian law treaties and their implementation in Nairobi (June) and Pretoria (August). We will also continue to engage other States on a bilateral basis.

Like others, the ICRC is concerned about reports of the continued use of cluster munitions and the humanitarian consequences that following such use. Importantly, the use of such weapons has been rather limited since the adoption of the Convention and its entry into force. Concern about the continued use of cluster munitions has been expressed by many States and organizations, including the Presidents of the Meetings of States Parties. The ICRC welcomes these efforts. For its part, the ICRC would voice its concern about the use of cluster munitions in the framework of its bilateral and confidential dialogue with the parties to an armed conflict.

Nevertheless, the continued use of cluster munitions highlights the work that lies ahead for the supporters of the Convention. We all have a vested interest in ensuring the universalization of the Convention and bringing an end to the "unacceptable harm" that these weapons. Stigmatizing cluster munitions whenever they are used is an important element of this. The ICRC has no doubt that all our efforts in this regard will help bring an end to the cluster munitions era once and for all time. Thank you.