

Convention on Cluster Munitions: Intersessional Meeting 16-18 April 2013

Opening Statement:

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President of the Third Meeting of States Parties**

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Distinguished colleagues, friends of the Convention on Cluster Munitions

It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you all to this intersessional meeting of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Seven months have passed since we gathered in Oslo for the Third Meeting of States Parties, and much has happened since.

Together we have reduced and are continuing to reduce the danger to civilians represented by cluster munitions. Although there is room for improvements and greater efforts, it bears remembering on a day like this that we have made considerable achievements since September, and indeed since the adoption of the Convention in May 2008.

This meeting is an opportunity to learn from each other's experience: to take stock, and to review informally the initiatives we have taken, achievements we have made and the challenges we have encountered in our efforts to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

At the outset I would like to thank all those who participated at and contributed to making the Third Meeting of States Parties in Oslo a success. Our conclusion in September was that the 3MSP had been a very productive meeting, and that we had seen progress on a number of issues relevant to the implementation and universalization of the Convention.

Distinguished colleagues,

Six more States have joined the Convention since 3MSP. Let me take this opportunity to congratulate and extend a very warm welcome to Peru, Australia, Nauru, Liechtenstein, Chad and Andorra as new States parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

We are now 81 States Parties to this Convention. While our aim is universal accession, we have reason to be proud. Since the Convention's adoption in 2008, the number of States Parties has grown rapidly. I am convinced that this not only demonstrates a broad, international endorsement of the Convention's objective, but a widely shared perception of the Convention's effectiveness. As we continue our efforts to promote universal accession to the Convention, I believe that one winning argument will be that the Convention actually works – that we can credibly claim that the use of cluster munitions is widely perceived as illegitimate and unbecoming of responsible members of the international community.

The greatest achievement of this Convention is that its adoption has led to an immediate and dramatic reduction in the use of cluster munitions worldwide. Much human suffering has, as a consequence, been averted. For the first time since 2008, however, we have this year witnessed the intended and sustained use of these weapons. According to a report by Human Rights Watch, cluster munitions have been used at more than a 100 locations in Syria in the past six months, with devastating consequences for the civilian population. While these actions are unacceptable and worrisome, they have provoked a reaction that underscores the global support enjoyed by the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The widespread condemnation of these actions in Syria shows that the norms established by the Convention on Cluster Munitions are effective principles of international humanitarian law.

Distinguished colleagues,

Over the course of the past seven months the Norwegian Presidency team has worked together with other States parties, the Coordination Committee and the Interim Implementation Support Unit to promote universal adherence to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and to strengthen the tools at our disposal for realising its full, effective implementation.

Let me take a moment to highlight some of our activities to these ends in the past months:

1. As part of the Presidency's efforts to promote universalisation and implementation of the Convention, we made a ten-day visit in January to Thailand, Cambodia, Viet Nam and Lao PDR. The purpose of the trip was to promote accession to the Convention by countries in Southeast Asia, and to learn more about efforts undertaken in the region to protect civilians from the dangers posed by cluster munitions. On this note I would like to reiterate my gratitude to the Governments of Thailand, Cambodia, Viet Nam and Lao PDR, as well as to civil society organisations and operators working in those countries, for the frank and direct conversations we had about the merits of the Convention.
2. Drawing on experiences from the Mine Ban Convention, we have sought to initiate an informal discussion on completion of clearance obligations in Article 4 of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The purpose of these discussions has been to bring clarity to and establish agreement on what is meant by "every effort" and "completion" well before States Parties meet their deadlines. We believe this is an important discussion that should be addressed sooner rather than later, and we look forward to hearing your thoughts on a draft discussion paper we will circulate, and intend to present to the 4MSP. You can find hard copies of the document at the back of the room.
3. Since 3MSP we have continued our efforts to advance the situation of victims. We have cooperated closely with victims and their representative organisations, and on 6 March, the Presidency made a statement during

the Human Rights Council's Interactive Debate on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In our statement we welcomed the OHCHR's recommendations for how to achieve greater labour force participation by persons with disabilities, and expressed our view that appropriate victims assistance ultimately rests on the strength of general disability and human rights policies, as well as inclusiveness in the labour market.

4. We have moreover sought to invigorate the intersessional meetings, and make them a relevant tool for implementing obligations arising from the Convention.

Our main objective has been to develop a format that both facilitate informal discussions about efforts to implement the Convention, and that simultaneously allow for in-depth conversations between experts on specific implementation challenges. These are both important functions that the intersessional meetings are expected to serve, but to some extent, by different participants.

Together with the Coordinators and the Interim Implementation Support Unit we have therefore been pleased to offer dedicated technical workshops in advance of this year's intersessional meetings. We hope that yesterday's workshops were useful, and that they allowed for the focused attention technical issues require. We also hope that by treating complicated, technical matters in dedicated workshops in advance of the intersessional meeting, the coming days' plenary sessions will be attuned to the competence and needs of the majority of stakeholders present at this meeting.

5. As mandated by 3MSP we have also continued consultations on a funding model and the establishment of an Implementation Support Unit. Open-ended consultations with States Parties, Signatory states and Observers were, as you all know, carried out on 8 February here in Geneva. We have since then also conducted informal consultations with a number of States Parties, building on the work that was done by the former Lebanese Presidency. (We have also conducted talks with the GICHD on a hosting agreement for the ISU). All the time, this has been done in close cooperation with the Coordinators on General Status and Operation of the Convention, Costa Rica and Zambia.

We intend to continue these consultations during this intersessional meeting, and hope to find a solution acceptable to all in time for 4MSP. To this end, we have prepared a first draft decision for the establishment of an ISU at the 4MSP. Hard copies of this document can be found outside the room.

Moreover, upon our request, the Interim ISU has prepared a background paper to assist and inform the discussions on the ISU-issue. (This paper compares the ISUs of the Mine Ban Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention and the CCW and indicates some possible lessons learned for

the CCM from these already existing units and financing models.) This paper is also available in the back of the room.

All interested delegations are invited to approach me, or any member of my team, with questions or suggestions throughout this intersessional meeting. There will also be a possibility to discuss this issue during the session on General Status and Operation scheduled to take place tomorrow afternoon, as indicated in the annotated program of work.

6. Recognising that good, accessible information about the Convention, including information about its objectives and achievements to date, is essential for its promotion, we have made a special effort to review and relaunch the official website for the Convention. Our hope is that the new website may serve as a better and more efficient communication tool for the Convention.
7. As President of the 3MSP, I expressed my condemnation of the use of cluster munitions in Syria on three occasions. While deeply distraught by these unacceptable actions, I have found the reaction by the international community encouraging. As required by the Convention, many States and other actors have made their best efforts to discourage the use of cluster munitions in Syria, underlining the extent to which the use of cluster munitions is considered illegitimate.

Throughout the year, we have worked closely with the Coordinators of the various working groups and the UNDP/BCPR as Interim ISU on many of these issues, and we have nurtured the important and distinct partnerships with ICBL-CMC and ICRC along the way.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The objective of this meeting, as you will be aware, is to strengthen our ability to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions. It is an informal forum where no decisions are to be made. To conclude my opening remarks I would therefore like to encourage all delegations present to contribute to the thematic discussions chaired by the Working Group Coordinators. Please use this meeting as an opportunity to engage in open, frank and focused conversations about our efforts to comply with the Convention.

Delegations are reminded that statements made at this meeting will constitute important input for the Lusaka Progress Report, in addition to the Transparency Reports prepared in compliance with Article 7 of the Convention. The progress report will be short and fact-based. It will provide an overview of progress made since the Convention entered into force and the status of the Convention as it stands towards the end of the Norwegian Presidency. It will as well identify some challenges preventing the Convention's full, effective implementation.

You have all received a draft programme with annotations that outlines how we aim to proceed in the coming days. Please note that the agenda is rolling. All times listed in the programme are therefore indicative. All delegates and the

Coordinators especially are asked to be flexible, and ready to proceed with the next agenda item as soon as any one item is exhausted.

With no further ado I would now like to invite Zambia and Costa Rica to the podium. As Coordinators of the working group on the General Status and Operation of the Convention they will lead us through the first session.

Thank you.