

**Cluster Munition Coalition Statement on Universalization
Convention on Cluster Munitions Intersessional Meetings**

7 April 2014



My name is Geoffrey Duke, I am a member of the Cluster Munition Coalition and I live in South Sudan. Earlier this year the UN Mine Action Service found evidence that cluster munitions have been used in South Sudan in an area not previously known to have been contaminated prior to December 2013. This has been devastating news especially given the existing burden of cluster munition contamination that my country struggles to clear. The perpetrators are yet to own up and take responsibility for their mistake.

Today I hope I can express to you the urgency of joining the convention with a metaphor. Imagine you live daily with an unexploded submunition by your side. Imagine this unexploded submunition waiting day-by-day, month-by-month, and even year-by-year like a real submunition in the ground. Waiting. Waiting to either be cleared or, as the many thousands of people like me living in the shadow of cluster munitions know, waiting to claim a victim. This metaphorical submunition is yours to clear – by joining the Convention or by encouraging others to do so. Universalisation of this treaty is a goal you can achieve. Please, don't leave it any longer.

As an indiscriminate weapon, it has been well established that cluster munitions have a devastating impact on the lives of civilians. The global norm against the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions is growing stronger and stronger, and most countries no longer want to be associated with the weapon. We have documented around 150 states speaking out about use by Syrian government forces, including many non-members of the Convention. That's clear proof of the worldwide stigma against this weapon.

113 countries have now joined the Convention on Cluster Munitions, of which 84 are States Parties. This includes more than half the countries that have been affected by cluster munitions; nearly half the countries that have ever stockpiled them; and nearly half of the countries that have ever produced them. Strong commitments against cluster munitions have also been given by many of those countries yet to join. This is a great achievement just three and a half years after entry into force.

Since the last Intersessional meeting in April 2013, Bolivia and Iraq have ratified the convention, and Saint Kitts and Nevis has acceded. We welcome and congratulate each of these countries and thank them for their commitment.

We must however voice our disappointment at the slow pace of ratifications and accessions within the last year. A year in which we have witnessed the ongoing use of cluster munitions in Syria continuing to take the lives of civilians; and the use in my country - South Sudan; yet promised ratifications and accessions have not been followed through – and we now need your action not just words.

Sometimes we hear from you that your ratification or accession process is “under consideration,” that it “will be done soon,” it is “at an advanced stage,” or “we will be a state party by 2MSP...3MSP...4MSP...5MSP.” And days, months and even years go by. We welcome these statements of intention and encourage you to continue voicing your support for the treaty and providing updates of your progress. But, we also need to see the results. We understand there is due process and that sometimes bureaucracy can be a real challenge. But we also know from the 84 countries that have achieved State Party status -

when there is the personal and political will, universalisation is a goal that can be met, and can be met swiftly.

You are also not alone in meeting this goal – many organizations are here to provide support: the CMC, the interim ISU, the ICRC, the treaty leadership and existing States Parties to the convention.

Good initiatives have taken place since the last Intersessional meeting, nationally and regionally, and we thank the states that have shown great leadership by organizing these initiatives: Togo, Chile, New Zealand, and others. We have seen good results, including the *Lomé Strategy* and the *Santiago Declaration*, both of which encourage all states in those regions to join the Convention quickly. We were pleased to work in partnership with you to help deliver these important initiatives.

We also welcome the CARICOM statement at the First Committee last October noting their commitment to bring all CARICOM Members on board the Convention as soon as possible. We offer our support to meet this goal and hope that others worldwide can support CARICOM to achieve it.

We would like to thank the Coordinators on Universalisation, Norway and Ghana, and previous coordinator Portugal, as well as those states participating in the ‘Universalisation Team’ of governments led by Portugal and Ghana. We would also like to commend the President of the convention Zambia for prioritising universalisation during its leadership.

Promotion of universalization needs to come from a much broader group of states, however. **All** States Parties have a legal duty under Article 21 to promote universalisation of the treaty. You can and should be the ambassadors and champions of the treaty, and we will work in partnership with you to meet this obligation.

Over the last year our CMC campaign network has continued to work in over one hundred countries worldwide. We advocate for the treaty, share expertise and resources, work in partnership with states and the treaty leadership to deliver results, and we raise awareness of the devastating impact of cluster munitions. Our collective global strength comes from national campaign members who work mostly voluntarily and via small grants to support the work of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We are here to support you to make this convention a success.

Last year marked a milestone for the CMC as we reached our ten-year anniversary. We marked two even more important milestones: the 5th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention in Dublin on 30 May 2008 and the 5th anniversary of the signing of the Convention in Oslo on 3 December 2008. CMC campaigners promoted the anniversaries worldwide, and we thank states that joined us, including those who braved the cold for a candle lit vigil and photo call here in Geneva in December.

We cannot let these anniversaries pass without respectfully reminding the 21 countries that signed the convention on 3 December 2008 but are yet to ratify to do so without further delay, including: Benin, Canada, Central African Republic, Colombia, Republic of Congo, Gambia, Guinea, Iceland, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Namibia, Palau, Paraguay, Philippines, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Somalia, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. We also urge the eighteen countries that adopted the Convention in Dublin in May 2008 but have yet to accede to keep your commitment and join the treaty without delay, including: Argentina, Bahrain, Belize, Brunei, Cambodia, Estonia, Finland, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Morocco, Papua New Guinea, Qatar, Serbia, Slovakia, Sudan, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu and Venezuela. In a week

that many of you are also here for the meetings of the Mine Ban Treaty – we ask Cambodia, Thailand, Turkey, Zimbabwe and the other forty-six States Parties to that treaty but have not yet joined the Convention on Cluster Munitions – why the delay? Don't abandon your role in the protection of civilians. When the world takes stock of the treaty at the First Review Conference in 2015, be a global *champion* in the protection of civilians.

Barring political instability the majority of countries yet to ratify should be able to do so in the year ahead – it is just a matter of prioritisation. Equally we know that a strong number of observer states are in the process of working towards accession - we are confident any challenges you face can be resolved and we stand ready to help you. Again, I ask you, please, don't leave it any longer.

Do not leave the bombs to lie there any longer. Do not let new ones drop down any further. Hurry up and join the rest. Together we can achieve a world that is free from the threat of cluster bombs.

Thank you.