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Intersessional Meeting of the Convention on Cluster Munitions

Statement of the International Committee of the Red Cross on International Cooperation and Assistance

29 June 2011

Mr. Chairman,

As highlighted in earlier statements made by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) international assistance and cooperation is one of the important features of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. ~~In many respects~~ the requirements in this area are cross cutting and touch upon every operational aspect of the Convention. International assistance and cooperation represents a shared commitment spread among all States Parties to secure the Convention's full implementation.

This shared commitment is reflected in the Vientiane Action Plan. The plan details specific activities and responsibilities for those States Parties affected by cluster munition remnants or which have stockpiles of cluster munitions and those States Parties that can provide technical, material and financial assistance to help the implementation of the Convention. This shared commitment is furthered by the proposal to have a specific working group on cooperation and assistance as part of the proposed structure for future intersessional work. The proposal~~s~~ for such a working group is fully supported by the ICRC.

At this point in our work the ICRC would like to convey 3 messages on international cooperation and assistance.

Firstly, in our view, securing the implementation of the Convention entails a process of engagement that must involve all States. While in outlining the obligations on assistance and cooperation, Article 6 uses the phrase "States Parties in a position to do so" when referring to the furnishing of assistance, it also recognizes that assistance can come in many different forms. These include activities that are of a technical, material and financial nature. As a result, assistance is not necessarily limited to funding but can also involve the exchange of equipment, technology, skills expertise and experience. It is important to note that cluster munition clearance and victim assistance programs have been underway in many affected States for years and there is significant experience and expertise that can be brought to bear on the problem from other affected States.

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Secondly, the fact that only a few countries are severely affected by cluster munitions and others face a localised or residual problem has important implications for how this Convention is implemented. It means that the efforts to eliminate cluster munitions and assist their victims can, from the outset, focus on meeting specific challenges in specific countries. In light of the number of States Parties with stockpiles of cluster munitions and the technical challenges associated with their destruction, assistance in stockpile destruction will be one of the most important areas of work. As we heard this week, there are a variety of approaches and programs available to help States in this area.

We believe that discussions this week have helped to provide some insight into the challenges facing affected States. We look forward to the presentation of the national plans envisioned by Action 33 of the Vientiane Action Plan to help provide greater detail on the specific needs for international cooperation assistance. *by 2 MSP if not already done*

Finally, it is clear that achieving the objectives of the Convention will require increased capacity and resources in the areas of clearance, victim assistance and stockpile destruction. As we have stated before, ~~in our view~~, affected States, donor States, regional funding organisations and agencies in a position to do so should pursue specific commitments to fund existing and expanded programs and examine their future funding levels for implementation of the Convention. *In a new* ~~in our view~~, it would also be useful to consider establishing dedicated funding sources for implementation, as was done by a number of States and organisations upon entry into force of the Mine Ban Convention. Support should be prioritized for areas where the direct and indirect human costs of cluster munition contamination are greatest.

~~in closing, we look forward to getting further a update on progress on international assistance and cooperation and the specific actions of the Vientiane Action Plan at the Second Meeting of States Parties in September.~~