



Statement

by

H.E. Ambassador Michael Biontino
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**“Cooperating to Implement the Convention on Cluster Munition:
The Country Coalition Concept”**

Bangkok, 16-17 March 2017

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, let me welcome you wholeheartedly at this Regional Seminar “Cooperating to Implement the Convention on Cluster Munition: The Country Coalition Concept”.

I am delighted to see that so many delegations and invitees have followed our call.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all those who have contributed to the excellent organization so far and who have thus paved the way for an enriching debate and a successful and productive outcome. I would like to mention in particular the European External Action Service for its generous support which made this event possible and “La Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique” for conceiving and organizing it. Here I would like to mention my friend Benjamin Hauteouverture who shouldered this responsibility.

Furthermore, in this context I would highlight the non-governmental and civil society community whose input has been of critical importance in the conceptualization and the preparatory phase of this seminar, particularly the ICBL-CMC.

Last not least, my deep gratitude goes to The United Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific which graciously provides the venue for our seminar.

When Germany took over the Presidency of the Convention on Cluster Munition in September 2016 we were pondering how to add value to the implementation of the convention in terms of lasting initiatives and concrete support. If we speak about the Convention on Cluster Munition and its impact we have to keep in mind that this convention is still a very young one and one with a rather specific and well defined approach and purview. So besides universalization – the convention has now 100 states parties and 19 signatories and we will have to continue our efforts to make it a universal norm and an integral part of universally accepted International Humanitarian Law, - we decided to focus on efforts to enhance the humanitarian impact of the convention. Before this backdrop we as the Presidency have undertaken the effort to establish a structured dialogue with countries, which for one reason or another have not become states parties, but also to elaborate the concept of establishing so called “country coalitions”. The idea was - with a country specific focus – to set up a framework for improved international cooperation among all relevant actors.

We hope that this concept helps us to unite all relevant existing and potential actors in an informal framework. Such coalitions would, of course include representatives of the affected country, partnering states, international organizations, civil society and non-governmental organizations as well as operators on the ground and other relevant experts, such as the GICHD and the ICRC. In principle the country coalitions would be coordinated by the affected country themselves together with a partner country in order to promote a more comprehensive approach to the country’s specific challenges which should include all aspects of mine action, covering destruction of stocks, mine clearance in all its aspects, victim assistance, land release and mine education.

We have chosen South East Asia as the venue for this workshop as we know about the relevance and urgency of the Cluster Munitions issues here. South East Asian countries are not just among the most affected countries in terms of contamination with Cluster Munition and respective drastic economic losses but also the ones with most victims and human suffering historically up to present days from this kind of inhuman weaponry. We very much hope that this workshop will enable you as affected countries to build coalitions to tackle those challenges more effectively and efficiently and to gather more international support for your respective endeavors. We count on your initiative to seize the potential arising from the political support of this event but also the practical

networking opportunities. I would like to stress that we as the Presidency of the Convention on Cluster Munition can only kick off certain processes and render our support in the initial phase and that these processes then have to become self-sustaining. I am convinced that this might work as we have a large “coalition of the willing” assembled today which is eager to tackle the challenges the region and its people are facing.

I think everything is set for a positive outcome so I look forward to having fruitful discussions and interesting meetings and I wish us all success.