

**Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) Opening Statement
Accra Regional Conference on the Convention on Cluster Munitions
28 May 2012
Delivered by Afi Yakuba, Director of FOSDA on behalf of the CMC**

MR. CHAIRMAN,
YOUR EXCELLENCY, THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA,
HONOURABLE MINISTERS OF STATE,
DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNDP,
COLLEAGUE CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL OVER AFRICA AND THE
WORLD,
MEDIA MEN AND WOMEN,
ALL PROTOCOL OBSERVED,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

On behalf of all civil society organisations working in peace and security in Ghana and the International Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC), I wish to extend a warm welcome to you all to Ghana and to this conference.

Mr. chairman today marks a historic moment on our national calendar as the first time Ghana is hosting an international conference on the subject of Cluster Munitions. We are grateful to the organisers; the UNDP and the Norwegian Government for choosing to organise this conference in Ghana. We also thank the Ghana Government for accepting to host this important conference. This makes Ghana the fourth country, after Zambia, South Africa and Uganda, to host such a conference.

The process to ban cluster bombs has come a long way since 2007 in Norway until the Convention finally came into force in 2010. It is worth mentioning that Africa, both states and civil society played a major role to the success story we are telling today.

More than two-thirds of our great continent is represented here this week. Africa was instrumental in bringing about the treaty that bans cluster bombs and we now need build momentum so that Africa continues to play a leading role.

We have made a good start. 41 of the 111 countries that have joined the Convention on Cluster Munitions are in Sub-Saharan Africa. We have just eight remaining countries in our region to join. Yet we still have a long road to cover. While we have a great number of countries already onboard, 22 countries still need to complete their ratification process.

For Sub-Saharan Africa, the obligations of this treaty are not difficult. Few countries possess stockpiles and no country produces cluster munitions. We remain thankful that contamination is not as severe as some other parts of the world. That notwithstanding, we have suffered far too many casualties from this horrific weapon. We must make progress to universalise and implement the Convention in solidarity with our neighbours who are or have been affected by cluster munitions. Angola, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda and Zambia still bear the scars of cluster munitions.

In recent weeks we have heard disturbing allegations of the use of cluster munitions in Sudan in the Nuba Mountains Region. These allegations must be investigated and any use of cluster munitions by anyone, anywhere must be condemned. Cluster bombs are not an acceptable weapon in any warfare of our time.

Globally, this Convention is working. In the last two years alone since the treaty came into force, more than 68.2 million stockpiled sub-munitions have been destroyed. This is progress we should all be proud of. However, as long as there are still stocks of these weapons, we cannot be confident that they won't be used in the future and that more innocent lives won't be lost. Several sections of this treaty are about preventing future tragedies and it is this preventive measure that is propelling us to cover more grounds.

One of the biggest priorities and challenges globally is getting more countries to join this Convention. Africa can lead the world in this effort. Firstly, by ensuring that every African country has ratified or acceded. Secondly, by encouraging other countries worldwide to join. Each and every country should stand up, voice its support and say: 'I am against cluster munitions'. It is with power in numbers that we can win this fight against cluster munitions.

In the next few days here in Accra, and in the coming months before the Third Meeting of States Parties in Oslo in September, we can make exciting progress. As we work together as Africa united against cluster bombs, we must continue to act with a great sense of urgency and shared purpose. We must be motivated by the plight of the victims—past, present, and future.

On our part, civil society and the CMC, would continue to drum the message to policy makers to take the necessary steps to ensure the success of the convention across Africa and indeed globally.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to welcome you once again. May you have very successful deliberations in this conference.

While you work hard, remember to take time to enjoy the famous Ghanaian hospitality, the sunny beaches some other places of interest. Be adventurous and taste some of our rare rich cuisine. Take a trip to the Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum for some history lessons of the first President of Ghana and a fire brand of Africa liberation.

We wish you fruitful deliberations.

Akwaaba.