



Republic of Ghana

OPENING STATEMENT

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. JOHN DRAMANI MAHAMA

VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA

**AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA REGIONAL
CONFERENCE ON THE UNIVERSALIZATION OF THE CONVENTION ON
CLUSTER MUNITIONS (CCM) MONDAY 28TH MAY, 2012, LA PALM ROYAL
BEACH HOTEL, ACCRA, GHANA**

Mr. Chairman,

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Invited Guests,

Esteemed Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Let me take this opportunity to extend my warmest welcome, on behalf of the Government and People of Ghana, to all representatives of the Sub-Sahara States Parties and Non-States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), the United Nations, Regional and International Organizations and Institutions from different continents around the world, for your presence here today to partake in this Conference which aims at the Universalization of the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Sub-Sahara Africa. In that regard, please accept the sincere greetings from His Excellency John Evans Atta Mills President of the Republic of Ghana.

Cluster munitions kill or maim civilians, including women and children, obstruct economic and social development, including loss of livelihood, impede post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction, delay or prevent the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. It can negatively impact on national and international peace-building and humanitarian assistance efforts, and have other severe consequences that can persist for many years after use. Not

forgetting the potential impact on peacekeeping troops who often move into conflict zones to offer humanitarian support.

Mr. Chairman, Ghana has never procured, stockpiled, manufactured or used Cluster Munitions. Ghana has also escaped, so far any contamination of our land through its use by a third country. However, recognizing the immense humanitarian imperatives of the Convention, Ghana signed on to the Convention on 3rd December, 2008, and ratified it on 3rd August, 2010. I am informed that the Attorney Generals Department has prepared a draft legislation to enable Ghana implement the Convention. The legislation will seek to prohibit the use, manufacture, stockpile, and transfer of cluster munitions and provide penal sanctions for any violations.

By hosting this Conference, we wish to further demonstrate our commitment to the promotion of peace, peaceful co-existence, human security and international co-operation as mandated by our constitution. We support the ban on the use of Cluster Bombs because of its wide and indiscriminate effect when used, which leaves behind a deadly legacy of a large number of unexploded units that may lie undetected for as many years or many years and to clean up at enormous cost. These same weapons dislocate families and prevent the use of their land for socio-economic activities long after their use in an area. As we speak, many countries that have emerged from wars, including the Second World War and other recent wars, continue to battle clean-up challenges, as well as the challenges brought to bear upon innocent victims and their families.

Our most grievous challenge today, concerns the rise of non-state actors which are replete in our region in intra-state wars and various acts of terrorism. I therefore, support the call for the criminalization and stigmatization of the production, stockpile and use of Cluster Munitions by State actors to forestall its potential fall into the hands of Non-State actors.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, due to the suffering endured by civilians during and long after Cluster Munitions have been used, I would like to reiterate that call once again for States particularly African States that are always at the receiving end when it comes to the global arms

trade to become party to the Convention without delay to demonstrate our collective efforts to prevent future human suffering by their use.

Without any doubt, the Convention on Cluster Munitions has indeed given a tremendous boost to international humanitarian law. I would therefore urge all States to actively engage in the discussions over the coming days, share views and be frank of our collective efforts to promote universalization of the Convention in Africa.

I am confident, that this Conference would provide a golden opportunity for all delegates to share ideas and agree on an action plan that will provide impetus to the work of the States Parties by identifying steps that need to be taken to ensure that the Convention is effective in ensuring global adherence and to promote its universal norms.

Mr. Chairman, allow me to express my sincere appreciation to the Kingdom of Norway for the continuous leadership and commitment to the Oslo process and the UNDP and congratulate them on their immense financial support and efforts in ensuring the implementation of the Convention. I use this opportunity to state that Ghana will contribute effectively to the promotion of this laudable Convention during the presidency of Norway, which takes effect in September after the Third Meeting of State Parties, during which Ghana also takes up a role to coordinate activities to universalize the Convention, globally.

Let me also pay a special tribute to the CMC and other CSO's that have joined us today. I wish to reiterate, that this would not have come about without your vigorous advocacy, your determined and immense campaign and engagement with State Parties. We will continue to count on you for the excellent role that you play, even as we take up this role that I have just mentioned.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, it is the commitment to a cause that brings progress. I trust that just like Ghana, you are also committed to this singular objective

of global peace and a world free of Cluster Munitions and I am confident this Conference would achieve its objective.

Mr. Chairman, before I take my seat, I wish to state that our common circumstances has brought us together and we should take this golden opportunity once again to further deepen the norms of the prohibition of Cluster Munitions use in Africa.

It is now my pleasure to officially declare this important Conference opened.

I thank you.