

Statement on universalisation

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first thank the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme for organising this Conference on the promotion of the universalisation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. It is a great honour to be invited, and I am grateful to have the opportunity to address this distinguished audience.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions opened for signature in December 2008 and entered into force in August 2010. Over the last five years, 113 States have signed the Convention, and of these, 84 have already become States Parties. So the Convention has been welcomed and accepted on a global scale in a very short period of time.

As former President of the Convention and currently Coordinator of Universalisation, Norway encourages all States to join the Convention as soon as possible. Our assessment so far is that the rate of signature and ratification has been impressive, by the standards of international law-making, especially in the realm of disarmament.

Universalisation is, however, not just a matter of encouraging States not Party to accede to or to ratify the Convention on Cluster Munitions. It is also about promoting universal adherence to the norms the Convention establishes. Here too, we have seen remarkable progress.

Since the adoption of the Convention in 2008, the use of cluster munitions has all but stopped. There have been a few instances of very limited use, but the sustained use of these weapons has only been reported in one country since then, namely Syria. The ongoing use of cluster munitions reported in Syria has been met with widespread, categorical condemnation by the States Parties and, more interestingly, by States not Party. This fact underlines the extent to which these weapons have been effectively stigmatised and are now considered illegitimate means of war. The norm against any use of these weapons is working.

Moreover, the use of cluster munitions in Syria should not blind us to the more general development over the course of these five years. Remember, just a few years prior to the adoption of the Convention, the vast majority of States

considered cluster munitions a legitimate weapon. Many of those States held stockpiles of these weapons, and many envisaged a central role for cluster munitions in their national defence strategies. A significant change has since taken place. The use of cluster munitions is today generally considered unacceptable, illegal and unbefitting of responsible members of the international community. Many former users, producers and stockpilers of cluster munitions have taken steps to rid themselves of these weapons, and the international market for such ammunition has virtually disappeared.

From our perspective, these developments are testimony to the value of a Convention that has already made significant strides towards universalisation. While too many States remain outside the Convention, very few are today indifferent to the norms it establishes. As we continue our efforts to promote universal accession, we believe that the most convincing argument will be that the Convention actually works. That it has effectively stigmatised a whole category of weapons; that it has contributed to strengthening the protection of civilians; and, that it has served to mobilise resources and give direction to our common efforts to address the humanitarian problems caused by use of cluster munitions in the past.

In closing, let me again commend the Government of Chile for this timely initiative. Establishing a cluster munitions-free zone in Latin America and the Caribbean is an important objective, the achievement of which would re-confirm this region's leadership in disarmament affairs and in the strengthening of international humanitarian law.

I wish you a very successful Conference.

Thank you.