



Statement by H.E. Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer
of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva at the
Second Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions
Review of the operation and status of the Convention and other matters important
for achieving the aims of the Convention: Universalization
Geneva, 25 November 2020

Mr. President,

As this is the first time taking the floor, the Delegation of the Holy See would like to express its appreciation to you and your team for the excellent preparatory work for this Second Review Conference, notwithstanding the ongoing challenges and constraints brought by the pandemic.

This Delegation looks forward to a successful outcome of this meeting and a strong renewal of our shared commitments in the implementation of the obligations that were solemnly contracted in order to prevent the devastating consequences of cluster munitions and to make up for the mistakes of the past.

Given the importance of ensuring the sustained functioning of the Convention, this Delegation did not object to holding the first part of this Conference in a fully virtual manner. However, we would like to have it placed on record that the use of such a modality is an exception that should not set any precedent.

Mr. President,

As one of the first States to ratify the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Holy See remains fully committed to its implementation and has continued to encourage other State Parties and non-Parties to reaffirm the preeminent and inherent value of human dignity and the centrality of the human person.

In this regard, the Holy See is pleased to welcome Sao Tomé & Príncipe, Niue and Saint Lucia as new States Parties. We wish to thank those States for their remarkable efforts as well as that of Chile and the Philippines in their capacity as coordinators of universalization aspects under the Convention. Yet, it is most unfortunate that we are still far behind the goal of 130 States Parties that was set five years ago in Dubrovnik.¹

What is even more regrettable and concerning, however, is the fact that cluster munitions continue to be used in some conflicts today, inevitably giving rise to new victims and contamination.

Mr. President,

A renewed sentiment of urgency should impel the international community as a whole. Universalization is not an optional component of the Convention. It is a legal obligation. Universalization has direct implications and far-reaching consequences on the operations and on the effective implementation of the Convention, in particular with relation to victims' assistance.

The more we invest in universalization and disarmament efforts, the less will we need to spend on humanitarian assistance. In this regard, the Holy See wishes to recall that "joint military operations should be opportunities for States Parties to promote the standards introduced by the new instrument with the objective to protect civilians during and after armed conflicts".²

¹ Cf. Dubrovnik Action Plan, First Review Conference, September 2015.

² Cf. Declaration of the Holy See attached to the instrument of ratification of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, 2008.

Mr. President,

Bearing in mind the hope of attaining the adherence of all States to the Convention, and in light of the necessary efforts for its universalization and full implementation, this Delegation reiterates its concerns over the introduction of new terminology in the proposed Action Plan, which would shift the attention and efforts away from the core obligations of the Convention towards more political and ideological issues. We urge, once again, that any language that could have a negative impact on universalization efforts should be avoided.

As has always been the case since the beginning of the Oslo process, the Holy See is firm in its determination to contribute to the universal adherence to the Convention and to upholding its standards. In this regard, the Holy See wishes to take this occasion to renew its appeal to all States outside the Convention to consider joining in the global efforts to building together a more secure world. We owe this to the too many victims of the past and to the potential victims whose lives we can protect by the full implementation of the Convention.

Thank you, Mr. President.