

Africa Regional Workshop on Universalization of the Convention on Cluster Munitions

Addis Ababa, 4-5 August

CMC's statement for Opening Session

Delivered by Bekele Gonfa, Executive Director, SRaRO

A cluster munition is a weapon containing multiple explosive submunitions. Like landmines, these submunitions can remain a fatal threat to anyone in the area long after a conflict ends. Cluster munitions have been taking a heavy toll on civilians around the world. For example, an average of 94% of cluster munition casualties are civilians. Therefore, the Oslo Process, a global humanitarian action, with active participation of African states, against cluster munitions resulted to the adoption of the Convention on Cluster Munition in 2008.

Now with over 60 per cent of the world's countries being member of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, this humanitarian international law is establishing a global norm against cluster munitions and their production, transfer, investment and use. The Convention has been already delivering. For instance, States Parties to the Convention have destroyed over 1.3 million cluster munitions and 160 million submunitions and eight countries that used to be affected by cluster munitions freed their countries from the scourge of cluster munitions. The Convention also heals cluster munition victims by recognizing their right as a legal obligation and by obliging States Parties to address their needs.

These significant and lifesaving achievements of this Convention just over the past six years of its implementation, show how extraordinary this Convention is in getting rid of cluster bombs.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have been campaigning against landmines and cluster bombs for nearly two decades, and I have been always encouraged by African states' commitment and action to eradicate these hideous weapons. I am particularly proud in how strong the African states have acted against antipersonnel landmines, a weapon with similar horrific consequence like cluster bombs.

43 African states have joined the Convention, of which 29 are States Parties. There are only 11 African states that have not yet joined the Convention, and close to fifty percent of them are in East Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan and South Sudan).

On behalf the Cluster Munition Coalition and as an African campaigner, and as an individual who has experienced the plague of landmine personally, I call on all peace loving African countries, including my country Ethiopia that remain outside of the Convention on Cluster Munitions to not hold back anymore, join the Convention as soon as possible to take us a step closer to a region free of cluster munitions. I also encourage African States Parties to the Convention to stay committed in achieving the Convention and Dubrovnik Action Plan's goals.

At least 14 countries in Africa have been affected by cluster bombs. And sadly, cluster munitions are being used in Syria and Yemen, where so many civilians have been injured or killed and too many lives will continue to be at risks of unexploded remnants of cluster bombs for many years after the conflicts have ended. But by joining the Convention on Cluster Munitions, you can help stopping those violations of international humanitarian law, you can help reinforcing the growing stigma against cluster munitions and you can help eradicating the weapon.

I am looking forward to hearing from all States not party to the Convention later this morning and throughout the two days of this workshop on steps they have taken to ratify or accede the Convention.

Thank you.