

Regional workshop on cluster munitions: Towards a cluster munition free zone in Latin America and the Caribbean

Opening statement: New Zealand, Coordinator on National Implementation Measures

Mr Undersecretary, Ambassadors, ladies and gentlemen

Allow me at the outset to express New Zealand's gratitude to the Government of Chile for hosting this regional workshop on cluster munitions, which looks towards the creation of a cluster munition free zone in Latin America and the Caribbean.

We would also like to thank UNDP, for its organisation of the workshop, as well as for its ongoing support for the implementation of the Convention.

We would like to congratulate the Government of Chile and the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean assembled here today for your committed engagement on this vital issue. We would also like to extend our support to the intent of the proposed Santiago Declaration. New Zealand is a strong supporter of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We support its universal implementation, and its implementation throughout all regions.

New Zealand was one of a number of countries, who early on saw the humanitarian importance of banning cluster munitions. Alongside many of you present today, New Zealand drove to set the Convention in place from the very outset.

Our country was a strong supporter of the Oslo Process, and we were honoured to host a negotiation conference in Wellington in the final stages of the Convention's drafting in February 2008. At this conference, 79 countries adopted the "Wellington Declaration" setting forth some of the key principles to be included in the Convention.

We signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions in December 2008, and ratified it one year later in December 2009. We were delighted to be one of the 30 countries for whom the Convention entered into force in August 2010.

Our support for the Convention remains undiminished, and we are privileged to continue in our role as Coordinator on National Implementation Measures for the Convention. New Zealand sees effective national implementation by all States Parties as one of the keys to ensuring that our treaty lives up to its humanitarian objectives.

At the Meeting of States Parties in Lusaka in September of this year, New Zealand (alongside Zambia) co-chaired a high-level side event on national implementation. This meeting highlighted the importance of national implementation for the ongoing health of our Convention. It also sought to draw attention to some of the avenues that exist for those who may wish to seek assistance to meet their implementation obligations.

I will take the opportunity this afternoon to provide you with an overview of some of the tools which exist to assist countries to implement their Convention obligations. These tools include the ICRC's comprehensive model legislation for common law countries and the New Zealand-drafted model legislation for small states not possessing or being contaminated by cluster munitions.

New Zealand stands ready in its role as national coordinator to assist countries to implement their Convention obligations. I look forward to talking to as many of you as possible throughout the course of this workshop to hear about the implementation status of the Convention in your own countries. I am also keen to learn more about the challenges you have faced, or continue to face, in implementing the Convention.

Thank you Mr Undersecretary