



**Statement by H.E. Archbishop Fortunatus Nwachukwu, Apostolic Nuncio,
Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other
International Organizations in Geneva at the 10th Meeting of States Parties to
the Convention on Cluster Munitions – Victims Assistance**
Geneva, 30 August 2022

Mr. President,

Since the Convention on Cluster Munitions entered into force, there is no question that through the combined contributions and synergies between different stakeholders, it has achieved significant progress and has made a real difference, especially among the victims affected, as well as among those that it has helped prevent.

The Holy See also wishes to seize the occasion of this Meeting of States Parties to assure its human proximity and that of its institutions to victims, men and women of all ages, and to reiterate its deep concern for the marked increase in civilian casualties. In this regard, for the purpose of this Meeting, the Holy See deems it important to recall that Art. 2 of the Convention “adopts a broad definition of cluster munitions victims, including persons directly impacted, their families and communities, and requests States Parties to provide them with assistance [...]”¹

Mr. President.

The desire for peace, security and stability is one of the deepest longings of the human heart. Pope Francis has decried the fact that the first victim of every conflict is “the human family’s innate vocation to fraternity”². Indeed, “every war leaves our world worse than it was before. War is a failure of politics and of humanity, a shameful capitulation, a stinging defeat before the forces of evil. Let us not remain mired in theoretical discussions but touch the wounded flesh of the victims. Let us look once more at all those civilians whose killing was considered ‘collateral damage’. Let us ask the victims themselves... look at reality through their eyes, and listen with an open heart to the stories they tell. In this way, we will be able to grasp the abyss of evil at the heart of war. Nor will it trouble us to be deemed naive for choosing peace”³.

In this regard, international cooperation in terms of victims’ assistance is one of the most splendid expressions of solidarity and of the unity of the human family, demonstrating that we are all brothers and sisters.

Mr. President,

There is no time to waste precisely because every person and every victim, woman, man, girl and boy, counts. The spirit of this Convention lies in the idea of partnership and cooperation, which should also respect the different values and cultures of affected populations. In this regard, it is important for States Parties to listen to the voice of the victims and to include them in the implementation of the Convention in a true spirit of partnership

¹ Cf. Declaration upon ratification of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, 3 December 2008.

² Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter “Fratelli Tutti”, par. 39.

³ *Ibid.* paragraph 261

and ownership. After all, the best way to ensure that their needs are addressed properly, and that their rights are upheld, is to listen to the victims themselves.

Mr. President,

Preserving life and creating the conditions for an existence worthy of the human person should be at the core of humanitarian assistance. The Holy See remains hopeful that the States Parties to the Convention will carry out their responsibility - individually and collectively - to prevent cluster munitions from being a threat to life and an obstacle to the integral development of populations that have experienced and continue to experience conflicts. We owe this much to the too many victims of the past and to potential victims in the future, whose lives we can protect by the full and honest implementation of the Convention.

Thank you, Mr. President.