



**Statement by the Delegation of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other  
International Organizations in Geneva at the 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of States Parties to the  
Convention on Cluster Munitions – General Exchange of Views**  
*Geneva, 11 September 2023*

Mr. President,

The Holy See appreciates the commitment of Iraq to the Convention on Cluster Munitions and wishes to thank you for the work carried out in preparation of this 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of States Parties.

At the outset, the Holy See also wishes to congratulate Nigeria for its ratification of the Convention, as well as South Sudan for acceding to it. Any additional State Party to the Convention represents a renewed impulse to achieve universality, further ensuring that there will be less victims in the future and that those who already have tragically been affected can be properly assisted.

In this regard, the Holy See, while acknowledging that there are still States which are not party to the Convention, wishes to seize the occasion to make a strong appeal to all States to fully adhere to it and readily implement the Convention in its letter and spirit.

Mr. President,

As cluster munitions still continue to be used, it is of paramount importance for this Meeting to recall and firmly keep in mind the fundamental principles of this Convention. For this Delegation, this means an unequivocal reaffirmation of the preeminent and inherent value of human dignity and the centrality of the human person.

When we speak of “universalization” of the Convention, this is not just an optional component. It is a legal obligation<sup>1</sup>. Universalization has direct implications and far-reaching consequences, in particular with relation to victims’ assistance, which is one of the main reason why this Convention came into existence.

In this regard, the Holy See appeals to all parties to the conflict in Ukraine to put an immediate end to the use of cluster munitions and wishes to echo Pope Francis’ endless appeals to mobilize for peace in the war-torn Ukraine. The seeds of peace lie in sincere dialogue and the application of international law, including international humanitarian

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Art. 21, Convention on Cluster Munitions.

law. As many States Parties to this Convention know far too well, the deadly legacy of cluster munitions represents a stinging defeat for the innocent people who suffer from the cruelty of conflict, as well as for the achievement of integral human development, and the preservation of stability and peace.

Mr. President,

As His Holiness Pope Francis recalled during his apostolic Journey to your country, Iraq, in 2021, conflicts leave in their wake “death, destruction and ruin, not only materially: the damage is so much deeper if we think of the heartbreak endured by so many individuals and communities, and wounds that will take years to heal.”<sup>2</sup>

As a family of nations, when we are bound by the same provisions and when we share the same objectives under this Convention, victims’ assistance becomes a shared responsibility. Therefore, the delay and failure of one State Party is the failure of all, and this is inevitably measured in terms of the human lives lost or by delayed assistance to victims. By the same token, the success of one is also the success of all. On that note, this Delegation also wishes to congratulate States Parties that are proceeding in the completion of the destruction of their stockpiles.

Mr. President,

In renewing its proximity and that of the Holy Father to the numerous victims of conflicts around the world, the Holy See also wishes to express its gratitude to other States Parties to the Convention for their commitment and generosity – in particular in assisting victims of cluster munitions through international cooperation and assistance.

In view of the alarming rise in the number of victims, it is the sincere hope of the Holy See that we may continue with even greater vigor on this noble path in the defense of human dignity and life, as well as for the realization of the common good of all people.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, Meeting with Authorities, Civil Society and the Diplomatic Corps, Apostolic Journey to the Republic of Iraq, Baghdad, 5 March 2021.