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11th Meeting of States Parties of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM)

General Exchange of Views

Australia

President,

Allow me to start by congratulating you on your appointment as President of this 11th Meeting of States Parties of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. You can count on Australia's full support.

Please also allow me to congratulate Ms Pamela Moraga on her appointment as Head of the CCM Implementation Support Unit.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions, which this year marks 15 years since its adoption, was born out of a collective determination to address the humanitarian consequences and unacceptable harm to civilians caused by use of these weapons.

Regrettably, the norm against the use of cluster munitions established by this Convention is under serious strain. Recent documented cluster munitions use in a number of ongoing armed conflicts has underscored the continuing threat that these weapons present to civilians.

Russia's illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine has inflicted an intolerable toll on the Ukrainian people. Russia's invasion is a gross violation of international law, which Australia condemns in the strongest possible terms.

Russian forces' abhorrent use of cluster munitions in targeted attacks against civilians and civilian objects constitute serious violations of international humanitarian law and deserve the strongest condemnation by this meeting. Explosive remnants of war (ERW) pose a long-lasting threat to civilians and hinder humanitarian access. ERW can delay agricultural activity which can impact global grain prices and food security for regions in need.

President,

As a State Party to the CCM, Australia underscores our full commitment to the object and provisions of the Convention. We discourage the use, development, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions. We remain steadfast in our determination to promote the humanitarian objectives of the Convention and the Lausanne Action Plan, and achieve a world free of these weapons.

Australia calls upon states yet to do so to join the Convention without delay.

President,

In these challenging times, we must not lose sight of the Convention's achievements.

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Globally, states parties have reported collective destruction of 99% per cent of their cluster munitions stockpiles. This represents 1.48 million cluster munitions and 178.5 million submunitions - a remarkable achievement.

While progress is uneven across affected States and other areas, we also welcome reports that the pace of global clearance of cluster munitions contamination and other explosive remnants of war is increasing significantly. Australia welcomes innovative developments underway that employ autonomous technologies to assist with mine clearance, including the work of the Australian Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO).

We warmly welcome Nigeria as the newest state party to this important Convention. We also welcome South Sudan depositing its instrument of accession to the Convention [*it will become a state party on 1 February 2024*]. We hope others will follow their lead.

Australia is committed to playing our part to help universalise and strengthen implementation of the Convention.

We are a proud contributor to the CCM Implementation Support Unit and to the CCM Sponsorship Program.

In 2022, Australia supported clearance and risk education activities throughout the Indo-Pacific, including in Cambodia, Sri Lanka and the Philippines. These activities have contributed to clearance of landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war.

We also continue to work with Pacific Island partners on World War II-era unexploded ordnance remediation and related capacity building.

Earlier this year, Australia entered into a multi-million-dollar funding partnership with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian De-Mining which, among things, will support the Solomon Islands Government in addressing ERW contamination, and establish a baseline needs assessment for other countries in the region to deal with the threat of unexploded ordnance.

President,

Australia is deeply concerned by the dire financial situation facing the Cluster Munitions Convention. As of 31 August 2023, 40 States Parties have not paid their assessed contributions to the CCM for 2023.

Payment of assessed contributions is an international legal obligation. In accordance with Action 9 of the Lausanne Action Plan, we urge all states parties to pay their dues on time and in full.

We also recall that transparency and open exchange of information are critical to achieving the Convention's aims. In line with Action 46 of the Lausanne Action, we call

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on states in need of assistance in the preparation of their Article 7 reports to seek support from relevant partners. Australia stands ready to assist in this regard.

President,

Allow me to conclude by taking this opportunity to express Australia's sincere appreciation to mine action partners and operators globally, particularly those in the frontline of clearance, stockpile destruction, risk education and victim assistance efforts. We salute your courage and dedication to the goals of our Convention.

I thank you.

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