

CMC Statement on Universalization

*Convention on Cluster Munitions 11th Meeting of States Parties
Geneva, 11-14 September 2023*



Thank you, Mr. President,

The Cluster Muniton Coalition again commends South Sudan for acceding to the convention in August of this year and Nigeria for ratifying it at the end of February. By doing so, both countries have taken important steps to strengthen international peace and security, and we congratulate them both.

They are the first countries to accede and ratify to the Convention on Cluster Munitions since 2020. After such a long spell, it is heartening to see progress in our collective efforts to promote universalization of the Convention.

It's now 15 years since the Convention was adopted and we strongly encourage the 12 signatories that have not yet ratified to complete the process as soon as possible.

Signatory states have given various reasons for the lengthy delay in ratifying the Convention. For example, last year, the Democratic Republic of the Congo explained its ratification delay was “more a procedural technical matter than one of political will.”

Elsewhere, the lack of ratification does appear to be a question of political will. For example, year after year Cyprus [says](#) that its ratification cannot proceed until “the special security situation on the island” is resolved. Yet that challenge did not deter its ratification of the Mine Ban Treaty or Arms Trade Treaty so we do not understand why ratification of this Convention cannot proceed.

We welcome the updates provided this week by signatories Democratic Republic of Congo and Djibouti, though we would have hoped to hear from many more. We would like to reiterate that while technical and political challenges may arise, these states have had many long years to resolve them, and we hope to finally see the remaining signatories ratify by the next MSP, alongside many new accessions.

Our universalization efforts received a high-level boost in July 2023, when the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General António Guterres released his “[New Agenda for Peace](#),” which urges UN member states to work to “achieve universality of treaties banning inhumane and indiscriminate weapons” including the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We should all reiterate the Secretary-General’s call for countries that have not yet joined the Convention to do so without delay.

We greatly appreciate the active engagement by the Convention’s coordinators on universalization (Malawi and Spain) as well as the past, president, and incoming presidents UK, Iraq, and Mexico, the ISU, and many other states promoting universalization. The Cluster

Munition Coalition continues its own universalization outreach in partnership with these countries here in Geneva and at the national-level by national member organizations, including those supported by our “Investing in Action” small grants project.

Mr. President,

Today universalization outreach is even more critical as we witness the shocking increase in civilian harm from new use of cluster munitions. Russia is primarily responsible for this global increase following its widespread use of cluster munitions in Ukraine since its February 2022 invasion of the country. Russia continues to support Syria’s ongoing use of these weapons, hitting camps for people displaced by armed conflict.

It’s been deeply dismaying to see Ukraine’s use of cluster munitions and we were appalled by the United States’ decision to transfer a portion of its stocks to Ukraine in July. We should all be alarmed by [credible media reports](#) that indicate the Biden administration is now preparing to transfer even more US cluster munitions to Ukraine.

The Myanmar military’s use of an apparently domestically-manufactured cluster bomb documented by the Monitor add it to the shameful list of countries using cluster munitions.

None of these countries are party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, but these developments threaten the stigma that has steadily been building against these weapons. The CMC condemns any use or transfer of cluster munitions by any actor under any circumstances.

It’s critical that States Parties use this meeting to firmly condemn cluster munitions in accordance with the convention’s goals and provisions. At the last meeting, States Parties used the [final report](#) to collectively underscore their obligation never to use cluster munitions under any circumstances and “condemned any use of cluster munitions by any actor.” They expressed their grave concern over the increase in civilian casualties and the humanitarian impact resulting from the repeated and well-documented use of cluster munitions in recent years, particularly in Ukraine.

States parties should reiterate this strong language in the final report of this meeting. They should condemn not only the use of cluster munition, but also production, stockpiling, and transfers. This would be in keeping with the legal obligation that States Parties have undertaken to discourage any use of cluster munitions and to “promote the norms” that the convention establishes.

As the worldwide media coverage of the Cluster Munition Monitor report shows, the eyes of the world are upon us. Let’s not let them down.

Thank you.