



Statement of H.E. Archbishop Ettore Balestrero, Permanent Observer to the
United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva to the
12th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions
Geneva, 10 September 2024

Señora presidente,

En primer lugar, la Delegación de la Santa Sede agradece a su país, México, por el compromiso y arduo trabajo que dedica a la Convención sobre la prohibición de municiones en racimo. De igual forma, le agradecemos a usted - y a su equipo - la organización de las actividades que se han realizado para involucrar a los jóvenes en el desarme humanitario.

Madam President,

By placing the human person at the center, the Convention on Cluster Munitions is a living instrument and clear evidence of the direct link between disarmament and development. The Holy See therefore deplores the fact that cluster munitions continue to be produced, stockpiled and, even worse, *used* in armed conflicts, inevitably causing more victims and contaminating more land.

Existing disarmament treaties are more than just legal obligations, they are also moral commitments to present and future generations. Adherence to, and respect for international disarmament agreements and international law is not a form of weakness. On the contrary, it is a noble source of strength and of responsibility towards all humanity.¹

In this regard, my Delegation deems it important to recall that the universalization of the Convention is not an optional element: it is a legal obligation. Indeed, universalization has direct implications and far-reaching consequences for the operation and effective implementation of this instrument, particularly with regard to assistance to victims.

¹ Cf. Pope Francis Message to the first Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, Vienna, 21 June 2022.

For these reasons, the Holy See is deeply concerned about the withdrawal of States Parties and calls upon all to adhere fully to the Convention and to implement it promptly in its letter and spirit.

As ongoing conflicts demonstrate, peace is indivisible, and to be truly just and lasting, it must be universal. It would be deceptive and self-defeating to think that the individual security and peace of some is disconnected from the common good of all nations.

As many States Parties and non-Parties to this Convention know far too well, the deadly legacy of cluster munitions continues to haunt many innocent victims who have suffered the cruelty of conflicts. In this regard, as a family of nations, we should consider assistance to victims as a shared responsibility. The delay and failure of a single State Party to meet its deadlines under the Convention is a failure of all of us.

Conversely, the success of one State Party is the success of all. In this respect, my Delegation would also like to congratulate and encourage those States Parties that are making steady progress in completing the destruction of their stockpiles and the clearance of contaminated land.

Madam President,

Despite the progress achieved since the adoption of the Convention, our task is far from complete. The Holy See wishes to reiterate its appeal to preserve the integrity of the Convention and remains confident that the centrality of the human person as well as the inherent and inviolable value of its human dignity - "as such simply because he or she exists and is willed, created, and loved by God"² - will continue to inspire its implementation.

Thank you.

² Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith, Declaration "Dignitas Infinita" on Human Dignity, 2 April 2024, n. 6.