

**Cluster Munitions Convention
12th Meeting of States Parties
10.-13.9.2024**

**General Exchange of Views
Statement by Austria**

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Madame President,

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you for assuming the role of the President of the 12th meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions and assure you of the full support of my delegation.

Austria is fully aligned with the statements of the European Union and would like to add some remarks from a national perspective. Austria is also aligned with the joint statement on gender aspects to be delivered by Germany. Before going into substance, please allow me also to join others and express the sincere condolences of my delegation to the delegation of Peru for their loss.

States Parties, and particularly affected States, with the support of the whole CCM community, have undergone great efforts to fully implement their treaty obligations and strengthen the norms of the Convention. The CCM clearly makes a difference. It strengthens the protection of civilians and prevents some of the most severe patterns of harm, including on women and children, in peacetime and at times of armed conflict. All stockpiles among States Parties have been destroyed. This is a major milestone in implementation. Clearance continues to be one of the most challenging tasks, however we are pleased to see steady progress, with Bosnia and Herzegovina being the 11th State Party having completed its clearance obligations.

Austria condemns all and any use of cluster munitions by any actor and under any circumstances. Documented use of cluster munitions by States not Party to the Convention and non-state actors are a grave concern. Austria remains also concerned about the transfer of cluster munitions. These trends show that more needs to be done to make this Treaty a

universal one and counter any attempts towards weakening the stigma on cluster munitions that goes well beyond the Convention's realm.

Madame President,

Europe is confronted by a brutal and the illegal war of aggression waged by Russia against Ukraine, which includes widespread use of cluster munitions. This has resulted in increased threat perceptions by European partners that Austria fully understands. However, exactly in such times it is crucial to uphold international law, in particular international humanitarian law, and insist on the progress that has been achieved over decades in creating this body of law.

Cluster munitions will never add to the security of a country or its people. Cluster munitions are a security concern, they are a threat for human security, during war- and during peacetime. Cluster munitions have been stigmatized and prohibited because they are inherently indiscriminate and cause unacceptable suffering and because the humanitarian as well as social and economic consequences of using cluster munitions far outweigh their military utility.

There is ample evidence of this from all conflicts that we have seen, the immediate and long-term impact of any use of cluster munitions for the civilian population has been extremely severe. Cluster munitions remain hazard for decades after conflicts have ended, destroying the livelihood of communities and creating barriers for socio-economic development. All this is very well documented and the powerful testimonies of survivors speak for themselves in this regard.

Defending one's territory by using cluster munitions therefore comes at a severe price to the immediate and long-term security of one's own population.

Austria therefore regrets the decision of Lithuania to withdraw from the CCM. We are concerned about the implications of this decision – the unprecedented withdrawal from a humanitarian disarmament instrument. Withdrawing from IHL instruments and therefore weakening international law and the rules-based order is what plays into the hand of actors that aim at undermining this order.

We strongly hope for Lithuania to reconsider its decision to withdraw from the CCM.

Madame President,

In light of this, we consider it of utmost importance for States Parties to underscore the strength of the CCM and we reiterate our own strong commitment to this treaty. The Convention on Cluster Munitions is based on a very strong humanitarian argument and this will prevail. We are halfway in our joint efforts to fully implement the Lausanne Action Plan and should redouble our efforts to fully implement our obligations and protect the integrity of the Convention and we should spare no effort to strive for the universal adherence to the Convention.

I thank you.