

CMC Statement on Stockpile Destruction and Retention

*Convention on Cluster Munitions 12th Meeting of States Parties,
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Thank you, Madame President,

The Cluster Munition Coalition congratulates Peru for completing destruction of its remaining stockpiles of cluster munitions in December last year and for presenting today. Earlier in 2023, States Parties Bulgaria, Slovakia, and South Africa also completed destruction of their stockpiled cluster munitions.

The actions of these states have resulted in the completion of the destruction of all declared stocks of cluster munitions once held by States Parties, fulfilling a crucial obligation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Stockpile destruction is indeed a great success story of this convention. Collectively, States Parties to the convention have destroyed 1.489 million cluster munitions and 179 million submunitions, 100% of the cluster munition stocks declared - a milestone that shows the impressive positive and preventive impact of the convention.

Of the 112 states that have ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions, 43 States Parties declared stocks of cluster munitions that they have now completely destroyed, while the rest never held any or destroyed them long before the convention was adopted in 2008.

We urge Cyprus and Indonesia—the two signatories known to poses stockpile cluster munitions—to ratify the convention without delay, provide information on their stocks of cluster munitions, and steps taken to destroy them.

Mr. President, most non-signatories stockpile cluster munitions so this does not mean the total eradication of stockpiles is complete; far from it. Indeed, several states outside the convention are drawing on their stocks to transfer and/or use cluster munitions. This shows the need for universalization as well as greater effort to stigmatize the use of cluster munitions.

Between July 2023 and April 2024, the United States announced five transfers of cluster munitions to Ukraine. In July 2024, German television outlet ARD aired an investigative report in which a US Army spokesperson confirmed that US cluster munition artillery projectiles stored at a US base in Germany have been taken from there and shipped to Ukraine, transiting across Germany and Poland in the process.

The US withdrew its cluster munition stocks from its bases in Norway and the United Kingdom in 2010, but it may still stockpile cluster munitions in states parties such as Italy, Netherlands, and Spain. President Biden should immediately halt the transfer of cluster munitions given the significant short-term and long-term humanitarian and human rights risks to civilians.

Germany and other States Parties with US stocks of cluster munitions on their territory should tell the United States to remove its stocks of cluster munitions without delay. All States Parties should be clear in opposing any transit of cluster munitions across its territory, airspace, or waters.

Before closing, I would like to make a few remarks on the retention of cluster munitions for research and training purposes, as permitted under Article 3 of the convention. Over the past 16 years, most States Parties that initially retained cluster munitions for training have either eliminated them entirely since making their first declarations in transparency reports or reduced their stocks significantly and not replenished them. This shows that the initial amounts retained were clearly not the “minimum number absolutely necessary” for the permitted purposes under the convention.

We are pleased to see Belgium destroyed its last retained cluster munitions in 2023 and the number of States Parties retaining live cluster munitions for research and development has dropped to 10.

We seek clarification from South Africa as to whether it is retaining cluster munitions for training and research purposes, as this was not clear in its transparency reports. It is positive a handful of States Parties reported consuming their retained cluster munitions during the reporting period.

We hope that the 10 States Parties that still retain live cluster munitions will reconsider and destroy or otherwise regularly consume their retained submunitions - or to put it simply “consume them or lose them”!

Thank you.