

**SIERRA LEONE STATEMENT OF THE TWELFTH MEETING OF STATES PARTIES ON CLUSTER
MUNITIONS IN GENEVA FROM 10 – 13 SEPTEMBER 2024**

MADAM PRESIDENT

IT IS THE FIRST TIME THAT MY DELEGATION TAKES THE FLOOR AND SO I CEASE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO CONGRATULATE YOU AS PRESIDENT OF THIS CONVENTION FOR YOUR HARD WORK AND EXCELLENT FORTITUDE OVER THE PAST YEAR. MY DELEGATION PRESENT OUR CONDOLENCES WITH THE PASSING OF THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE/AMBASSADOR OF PERU.

I WOULD WANT TO THANK THE INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT UNIT (ISU) FOR WORKING HARD TO GET MEMBER STATES HERE IN THIS MEETING. CLUSTER MUNITIONS HAVE HAD A SEVERE IMPACT ON CIVILIANS, KILLING AND INJURING LARGE NUMBERS AND CAUSING LONG LASTING SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. THIS IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW TREATY PROHIBITS THE USE, PRODUCTION, STOCKPILING AND TRANSFER OF CLUSTER MUNITIONS AND REQUIRES STATES TO TAKE SPECIFIC ACTION TO ENSURE THAT THESE WEAPONS CLAIM NO FUTURE VICTIMS.

THE PROBLEMS CAUSED BY CLUSTER MUNITIONS ARE NOT NEW. IN NEARLY EVERY CONFLICT WHERE THEY HAVE BEEN USED OVER THE PAST 40 YEARS CLUSTER MUNITIONS HAVE TAKEN A HEAVY TOLL ON CIVILIANS BOTH DURING THE FIGHTING AND AFTER MILITARY OPERATIONS HAVE ENDED.

MADAM PRESIDENT

SIERRA LEONE ALIGNED ITSELF TO THE STATEMENT DELIVERED BY NIGER ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP AND MANY OTHER NATIONS. SIERRA LEONE'S SUPPORT TO THE CONVENTION ON CLUSTER MUNITION IS DEEPLY ANCHORED AND CONDEMNS THE USE OF CLUSTER MUNITION. SIERRA LEONE DOES NOT SUPPORT THE STATE OF LITHUANIA FOR WITHDRAWING FROM THIS CONVENTION AS THE USE OF CLUSTER MUNITION IS A DANGEROUS MEANS TO AFFECT HUMAN SUFFERING.

CIVILIAN CASUALTIES DURING CONFLICT OFTEN OCCUR BECAUSE CLUSTER MUNITIONS SCATTER HUGE NUMBERS OF EXPLOSIVES SUBMUNITIONS OVER VERY LARGE AREAS. SOME MODELS DISCHARGE HUNDREDS OF SUBMUNITIONS OVER MORE THAN THIRTY THOUSANDS ASQUARE METRES OF TERRITORY. SINCE THESE SUBMUNITIONS ARE GENERALLY FREE-FALLING, INCORRECT USE, WIND, AND OTHER FACTORS CAN CAUSE THEM TO STRIKE WELL OUTSIDE THE INTENDED TARGET AREA.

IN ADDITION, LARGE NUMBERS OF SUBMUNITIONS OFTEN FAIL TO DETONATE AS INTENDED, CONTAMINATING LARGE AREAS WITH DEADLY EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE. MANY THOUSANDS OF CIVILIANS HAVE BEEN KILLED OR INJURED BY THESE DEVICES. THE PRESENCE OF THESE WEAPONS MAKE FARMING A DANGEROUS ACTIVITY AND HINDERS THE RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF VITAL INFRASTRUCTURE SUCH AS ROADS, RAILWAYS AND POWER PLANTS. CLEARING UNEXPLODED SUBMUNITIONS AFTER A CONFLICT IS OFTEN DIFFICULT AND DANGEROUS. SOME COUNTRIES HAVE BEEN DEALING WITH UNEXPLODED SUBMUNITIONS FOR DECADES. LAOS PDR IS THE COUNTRY MOST HEAVILY AFFECTED BY CLUSTER MUNITIONS WITH TENS OF MILLIONS OF UNEXPLODED SUBMUNITIONS LITTERING ITS TERRITORY.

MADAM PRESIDENT,

THIS TREATY PROVIDES A COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK FOR ADDRESSING THE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THESE WEAPONS. IT PROHIBITS THE USE, PRODUCTION, ACQUISITION, STOCKPILING, RETENTION AND TRANSFER OF CLUSTER MUNITIONS IN THEIR STOCKPILES AND COMMITS THEM TO CLEARING AREAS CONTAMINATED WITH UNEXPLODED SUBMUNITIONS OR ABANDONED CLUSTER MUNITIONS. IMPORTANTLY, THE CONVENTION ALSO OBLIGES STATES TO PROVIDE FOR THE MEDICAL CARE, REHABILITATION, PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT, AND SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INCLUSION OF CLUSTER MUNITION VICTIMS IN AREAS UNDER ITS JURISDICTION OR CONTROL. STATES PARTIES IN A POSITION TO DO SO MUST ALSO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE AND COOPERATION TO HELP OTHER STATES IMPLEMENT THEIR OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE CONVENTION.