

**STATEMENT MADE BY THE COMMISSIONER OF THE SIERRA LEONE COMMISSION ON ARMS
AND AMMUNITION**

MADAM PRESIDENT,

PERMIT ME TO CONGRATULATE YOU ON YOUR WORK AND DEDICATION DURING THIS MEETING. ALSO, THANKING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUPPORT UNIT OF THE CCM TO GIVE ME A FULL UNDERSTANDING OF THE TRANSPARENCY REPORT ON ARTICLE 7. MR. EMAD AND MS. ELAINE WEISS FOR ALL EFFORTS TO ENSURE THAT SIERRA LEONE FULFILL ITS MANDATE

CLUSTER MUNITIONS ARE WEAPONS CONSISTING OF A CONTAINER OR BOMBLETS OVER A WIDE AREA. CLUSTER MUNITIONS WERE FIRST USED IN WORLD WAR II AND A LARGE PROPORTION OF CURRENTLY STOCKPILE CLUSTER MUNITIONS WERE DESIGNED FOR THE CONTEXT OF THE COLD WAR. THE MAIN PURPOSE WAS TO DESTROY MULTIPLE TARGETS DISPERSED OVER A WIDE AREA SUCH AS TANK OR INFANTRY FORMATION, AND TO KILL OR INJURE COMBATANTS.

HISTORY HAS SHOWN THAT LARGE NUMBERS OF SUBMUNITIONS FAIL TO EXPLODE ON IMPACT AS INTENDED. CREDIBLE ESTIMATES OF THE FAILURE RATES OF THESE WEAPONS IN

MADAM PRESIDENT,

RECENT CONFLICTS HAVE VARIED FROM 10% TO 40%. LARGE-SCALE USE OF THESE WEAPONS HAS RESULTED IN COUNTRIES AND REGIONS BEING INFESTED WITH TENS OF THOUSANDS, AND SOMETIMES MILLIONS, OF UNEXPLODED AND HIGHLY UNSTABLE SUBMUNITIONS. UNEXPLODED SUBMUNITIONS OFTEN EXPLODE WHEN HANDLED OR DISTURBED, POSING A SERIOUS DANGER TO CIVILIANS. THE PRESENCE OF THESE WEAPONS POSES A THREAT TO DISPLACED CIVILIANS. THE PRESENCE OF THESE WEAPONS POSES A THREAT TO DISPLACED CIVILIANS RETURNING TO THEIR HOMES, OBSTRUCTS RELIEF AND RECONSTRUCTION EFFORTS AND MAKES VITAL SUBSISTENCE ACTIVITIES LIKE FARMING HAZARDOUS FOR YEARS OR EVEN DECADES AFTER THE CONFLICT HAS ENDED.

BECAUSE THEY ARE “AREA WEAPONS”, WHICH CAN RELEASE VAST NUMBERS OF SUBMUNITIONS OVER AN AREA OF UP TO TENS OF THOUSANDS OF SQUARE METRES, THE IMPACT OF CLUSTER MUNITIONS ON CIVILIANS DURING CONFLICTS IS ALSO A SERIOUS CONCERN, IN PARTICULAR WHEN THEY ARE USED IN POPULATED AREAS.

MADAM PRESIDENT,

UNFORTUNATELY, TECHNOLOGICAL IMPROVEMENTS TO CLUSTER MUNITIONS HAVE NOT PROVIDED AN ADEQUATE SOLUTION. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT ANY SINGLE TECHNICAL

IMPROVEMENT COULD ADEQUATELY ADDRESS THE HUMANITARIAN PROBLEMS CAUSED BY THESE WEAPONS.

MADAM PRESIDENT,

34 COUNTRIES ARE KNOWN TO HAVE PRODUCED OVER 210 DIFFERENT TYPES OF CLUSTER MUNITION. THESE INCLUDE PROJECTILES, BOMBS, ROCKETS, MISSILES AND DISPENSERS AT LEAST 75 COUNTRIES CURRENTLY STOCKPILE CLUSTER MUNITIONS. CURRENT STOCK AMOUNT TO MILLIONS OF CLUSTER MUNITIONS, CONTAINING BILLIONS OF INDIVIDUAL SUBMUNITIONS. IF EVEN A FRACTION OF THE CLUSTER MUNITIONS IN CURRENT STOCKS ARE USED OR TRANSFERRED TO OTHER COUNTRIES OR NON-STATE ARMED GROUPS, THE CONSEQUENCES COULD FAR EXCEED THOSE OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES IN THE 1990s. FORTUNATELY, IF EFFECTIVE ACTION IS TAKEN NOW, IT IS STILL POSSIBLE TO PREVENT AN EVEN MORE SEVERE HUMANITARIAN PROBLEM IN THE FUTURE.

IT IS BASED ON THIS, THAT I WOULD LIKE TO REQUEST THE STATE OF LITHUANIA TO REVISIT ITS DECISION THAT THEY WITHDRAW THEIR DECISION TO ABANDON THE CONVENTION. THIS TREATY IS BUT GOOD FOR MANY REASONS BECAUSE THE WEAPON IS A THREAT TO HUMAN SUFFERINGS.

I WOULD ALSO LIKE THE CONVENTION ON CLUSTER MUNITION TO HELP MY COUNTRY, SIERRA LEONE TO TRAIN IT MILITARY TROOPS AND THE POLICE TO KNOW WHY THIS WEAPON SHOULD BE CONDEMNED BY ALL STATES IN THE WORLD. SIERRA LEONE WILL APPRECIATE THE CCM TO TRAIN ITS SECURITY SECTOR IN ORDER TO CLEAR CLUSTER MUNITIONS WHICH WERE WIDELY USED DURING THE 11 YEARS CIVIL WAR.

I THANK YOU MADAM PRESIDNT FOR GIVING ME THE FLOOR.