

**Opening Remarks by Mr. Umarbek Pulodov, Cluster Muniton Coalition**  
13th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions  
*Geneva, 16-19 September 2025*

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Thank you, Mr. President.

Excellencies, dear friends and colleagues,

My name is Umarbek Pulodov, and it is an honor for me to speak to you today on behalf of the Cluster Muniton Coalition. I am from Tajikistan, and over 30 years ago, when I was a young child, my life was changed in an instant by a cluster bomb. I was at home with my family and several guests, when a cluster submunition pierced the roof of our house and exploded. There was no warning, no sign, no time to react. And the outcome was catastrophic.

The submunition explosion killed my brother, two of our relatives, and injured everyone else in the room. It took my eye, and with it, many of the dreams I had. It didn't just injure my body, it changed the course of my life, and that of my family and friends. What followed was months of physical pain, rehabilitation, and emotional healing. Learning to live again was even harder, but I have made great progress, and now I have my own family and a good job.

Yet over time, I began to understand that surviving wasn't enough. I had to speak up—not just for myself, but for the many who never got the chance, and for the many who could be at risk of harm in the future. So, I joined with the CMC in 2007 and since then, I have been explaining why cluster munitions must never be used again to government officials in my own country and others that remain outside the convention. And I am here this week to speak to all those who have never had to experience the horror of these weapons firsthand about the deep and lasting impact these horrific weapons have on individuals, families, and entire communities. Because unfortunately, recent events show the need for a stark reminder of why we are here.

We are seeing the deeply troubling use of cluster munitions over and over in Ukraine, as well as past use in Syria and Myanmar, and apparent recent use by Thailand. Production is ongoing in 4 countries, with capacity to produce maintained in another 13. And last year the US made numerous transfers from its stockpiles. We cannot sit by as the use of cluster munitions becomes normalized. We call on all states to condemn and discourage any use, production, or transfer.

We also sadly watched Lithuania leave the convention earlier this year, citing national security concerns. We understand that states want to do everything possible to defend their people should war occur. But over 15 years ago, the international community agreed that “everything possible” could no longer include the use of cluster munitions because of the unacceptable harm they inflict. The convention therefore created a total ban ***by anyone, under any circumstances***. Meaning even, or especially, in times of conflict. And meaning ***by any soldiers***, even those well trained, because there can be no “responsible” use of cluster munitions, by anyone.

Indeed, if you think of my story, the armed forces that launched the cluster bomb that hit my house likely believed they were targeting a military objective. Surely the submunition that reached my home was not

intended to hurt me and my family. But that's exactly the problem with cluster munitions. They spread their deadly bomblets over such a wide area that the soldier loses any control over who gets hurt. The dozens of submunitions that each cluster bomb releases regularly fall far from their presumed target, hitting homes or hospitals or anything else in the area. And some bomblets may never explode at all, landing instead in orchards, fields, or playgrounds. Imagine the deathly power of that single submunition on the lives of my family and friends. Now imagine that impact multiplied for every cluster munition used.

I've painted a bleak picture, but there is hope! And I want to finish my comments with a celebration of what we have accomplished together, and what more we will surely achieve in the coming years if we renew our energy and commitment. Over 120 states have joined, and the CMC warmly welcomes Vanuatu as its newest State Party! This convention has succeeded in eliminating cluster munition stockpiles from 42 countries, destroying almost 180 million deadly submunitions. The convention has prompted cluster munition-affected countries to work diligently to clear their land, supported by others in a position to provide assistance and by the hard work of clearance operators. Survivors benefit daily from the convention's unique comprehensive provisions on victim assistance. We encourage you to read the progress reports issued for this meeting, including the 2025 Cluster Munition Monitor, which are full of data documenting what we have collectively achieved.

And again, with renewed effort, we can achieve even more. We hope in the lead up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Review Conference states will be motivated to work exceptionally hard to make progress or to facilitate progress by others. We challenge all the remaining signatories, and all other states not party, especially neighbors of Lao PDR as incoming president, to join the convention by the next Review Conference. We call on affected states to step up their clearance effort, and for the donor community to provide support to all countries and communities in need. We remind states to include survivors in the development and implementation of policies and plans that affect us.

In closing, Mr. President, as a survivor, I don't want pity—I want progress. I want to see a world where no family will fear an explosion coming from above, and no child will fear that a toy-like object could explode in their hand. This is why we are all here today, and it is a goal that together, we can reach. As always, the CMC looks forward to continuing our longstanding and highly effective partnerships with governments, the UN, and the ICRC. In these challenging times, your true commitment will make all the difference.

Thank you.