



123 Slater St. 6th floor, Ottawa ON K1P 5H2 CANADA  
tél: +1.613.241.3777 [info@minesactioncanada.org](mailto:info@minesactioncanada.org) [www.minesactioncanada.org](http://www.minesactioncanada.org)

---

## Mine Action Fellows Statement to 13MSP of the Convention on Cluster Munitions

Thank you, Mr. President. We appreciate your commitment to youth inclusion in this meeting. We are a small number of the over 150 Mine Action Fellows from 51 countries around the world.

We are all alarmed by the withdrawal of Lithuania from the Convention - it sends a dangerous message that the use of cluster munitions is acceptable. We are horrified by the ongoing use of cluster munitions. We cannot allow this. ***We have come too far to go backwards.***

Through our participation this week, we have noticed with concern that many more states should be present in this room. The urgency of this issue requires broader commitment and stronger action to uphold the Convention and protect civilians.

We recognize that while countries continue to fight over territory, cluster munitions make land unsafe and unusable for civilians, reducing the territory where people can live, farm, and carry out daily life. ***Do you see the irony in that?***

Beyond the immediate conflict, these weapons leave a devastating legacy, restricting communities' access to land and creating long-term humanitarian challenges.

In *all* 24 states still dealing with the deadly legacies of these weapons, those most directly threatened **are young people**. Children made up 42% of casualties last year; that is not a statistic but lives lost far too early. We recall the story of Umarbek, who was injured as an 8 year old and lost his brother and family members; his story, like many others, is ***proof*** that cluster munitions destroy for generations.

We cannot ignore the environmental impact either. Unexploded ordnance leaks toxins into soil and water, damages ecosystems, and denies safe access to agricultural land for decades. Climate change is making these risks worse: floods unearth buried explosives, wildfires can detonate ordnance, and extreme heat destabilizes old stockpiles. As a result, communities already struggling with conflict must also face compounded threats to food security, health, and the environment.

—

**Above all cluster munitions are an attack on our future.** We were not born when the majority of cluster munitions first contaminated land in Southeast Asia and the Balkans. We were only kids when these indiscriminate weapons came to Iraq and Afghanistan. Now, as young adults, we are beginning our careers while watching these weapons threaten thousands in Ukraine today.

Our generation is on the frontlines of addressing the harm caused by cluster munitions. Young people, as deminers, risk education coordinators, and victims assistance providers, are innovating the field, but we need **support** to keep doing this work.

Many of our colleagues have lost their jobs this year due to decreasing aid budgets. Their work was vital to implementing the Lausanne Action Plan, and without adequate, stable funding we risk losing both expertise and momentum.

Mr. President, as those on the frontlines of the work we have discussed here this week, our voices must be represented in this Convention.

To States, we ask you for a bit more generosity. **We ask you to invest in your youth.** Give them the same platform that we were given today.

We'd like to thank Canada and Switzerland for giving us this very opportunity. For investing in us and believing in our capabilities. Giving us a platform to show that we are more than willing to be a part of this effort. And of course to Mines Action Canada, whose Fellows program have helped us break down barriers in entering spaces that we believe we can make a change in.

The experience we have had over the past few days is something we will carry with us for the rest of our lives. To some of you, this week may have been another work week. **But to us – it is opening a whole new world of possibilities.**

It is knowing that we can be heard by you: decision makers. It is learning about the work that you have done. So please – **help us continue the work that you do.**

As youth from different regions, we call on all States Parties to take stronger action against cluster munitions. **War does not end when bombing stops**, it **ends** when the first child is able to play outside, and go to school without fear of losing their lives to wars of generations past.

If you remember one thing from us as you prepare for the upcoming Review Conference, it should be that you have a duty to speak out when cluster munitions are used and to support affected countries by increasing funding for clearance, assistance, and long-term recovery.

Thank you.