

BELGIUM

3rd Review Conference - Convention on Cluster Munitions September 2026

Belgium aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union and wishes to make the following remarks in its national capacity.

Belgium warmly congratulates the Lao People's Democratic Republic on its assumption of the Presidency of this Third Review Conference. No host could be more fitting. Few countries understand the long-term human consequences of cluster munitions as profoundly as Laos, where unexploded ordnance continues to affect lives and livelihoods more than half a century after it was deployed. We commend the Government and people of Laos for their leadership and generosity in hosting this Conference and welcoming participants from around the world.

Belgium takes particular pride in its longstanding commitment to the objectives of this Convention. In 2006, Belgium became the first country in the world to adopt national legislation banning cluster munitions, helping to pave the way for the Oslo Process and, ultimately, for the negotiation of this treaty. Since the Convention entered into force, Belgium has completed the destruction of its stockpiles and remains firmly committed to the Convention's object and purpose: eliminating the suffering and harm caused by cluster munitions.

As we gather for this Review Conference, Belgium wishes to underscore three priorities.

First, universalization.

The strength of this Convention lies not only in its legal obligations, but also in the powerful international norm it has established. We encourage all states that have not yet joined the Convention to do so without delay. We also call on States Parties to use their bilateral and multilateral engagement to advance universalization, particularly with states that continue to use, produce, or transfer cluster munitions.

Second, clearance and victim assistance.

Clearance is essential not only for safety, but also for post-conflict recovery and development. Communities cannot fully prosper, land cannot be productively used, and critical infrastructure cannot be developed where contamination persists. We therefore welcome the emphasis placed by this Conference on linking clearance efforts with broader socio-economic development.

At the same time, victim assistance must remain at the heart of our collective efforts. Support for survivors should be rights-based, survivor-centred, gender-responsive, and sustainable. Our commitment does not end when an incident is cleared or a project is completed. It is an enduring responsibility to those whose lives have been affected.

Third, preserving and strengthening the norm against use.

Recent conflicts have demonstrated that the threat posed by cluster munitions remains real. Their use continues to result in civilian casualties, long-term contamination, and humanitarian consequences that endure long after hostilities have ended. Belgium condemns the use of cluster munitions by any actor, anywhere, under any circumstances, and calls on all states, whether party to the Convention or not, to respect and reinforce the norm embodied in this treaty. Every use undermines the protection that this Convention seeks to provide. In this regard, Belgium is deeply concerned by the indications surfacing regarding use in Mali, and calls upon the Mali authorities to investigate this further.

As we look ahead and adopt the Vientiane Capital Action Plan, Belgium stands ready to support its implementation through practical cooperation, diplomatic engagement, and continued solidarity with survivors and affected communities. The role of the ISU is critical in this regard, and Belgium supports the recommendations put forward in the Working Paper on the Convention's machinery and the institutional aspects of the ISU.

The journey from Oslo to Vientiane reflects what can be achieved through principled multilateral action and sustained commitment. Belgium remains dedicated to that path and to the shared goal of a world free from the humanitarian harm caused by cluster munitions.