

CMC Opening Remarks by Umarbek Pulodov
Third Review Conference, Convention on Cluster Munitions
Vientiane Capital, 14-18 September 2026

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, colleagues, friends, and fellow survivors,

Good morning.

My name is Umarbek Pulodov, and I come from Tajikistan.

It is a great honour for me to stand before you today, not only as a member of the Cluster Munition Coalition, but also as a survivor.

Before my accident, I was living an ordinary life. I had my family, my work, my plans and my hopes for the future.

But all that changed in a single moment, when I was injured by a cluster munition in **1993**. I still remember that day and the shock of realizing that my life would never be the same again.

The consequences went far beyond the physical injury itself. I had to face emotional challenges, changes in my independence and uncertainty about the future. Things that had once seemed simple became difficult, and I had to learn how to adapt and move forward.

An injury does not affect only one person. It changed the lives of my family and had a deep impact on my friends and colleagues. At the same time, their support was what helped me recover, alongside access to rehabilitation, and – critically - the determination not to give up.

Step by step, I rebuilt my life. And over time, I saw that my experience could have a purpose beyond my own recovery. I could help prevent other people from experiencing the same pain.

In 2008, I became part of a group of survivors advocating for a ban on cluster munitions. This group, led by CMC member Humanity and Inclusion, gave survivors a voice in the lead up to and during the negotiations. Each of our stories of suffering from cluster munitions moved delegates. But were also empowered to be powerful advocates contributing to positive change.

As part of these “Ban Advocates,” I had the honor of visiting Laos for the First Meeting of States Parties to the Convention in 2010.

While I already knew a lot about cluster munitions, it was eye-opening to see the heavy burden Laotian communities still carried from massive cluster bomb use decades ago. And to see the resilience of a people living with the daily threat of cluster munitions, and the determination of countries like Laos working hard to make their land safe again.

I’m so grateful for the opportunity to be back in Laos. To reflect on how far we have all come as a community. And to take note of the work that still remains.

Since I was first in Laos, there has been ample proof of the **power of this Convention**. Its strong words on paper have turned into a better reality for many, with huge numbers of cluster munition stocks destroyed, large areas of land cleared, and countless survivors supported, all with the help of generous donors. The Convention has worked. Truly.

It has also created a stigma against cluster munitions, even among many states even outside the convention. They may not have joined, but they feel the power of the norm.

We should be proud of these accomplishments, but we cannot be satisfied. Our work is far from done. And over the past 5 years we have faced challenges we have never known before.

So Mr. President, dear colleagues, today the Cluster Munition Coalition is calling on all states to **stop the harm and stand up for the ban** on cluster munitions. This is a simple message that we hope will be echoed throughout the week.

This convention and its norms need your unwavering support now more than ever. We are asking in particular for action in three areas:

First, we need more efforts to universalize the convention and its norms. We are so pleased to welcome three new States Parties since the last Review Conference. But this is far from enough. We call on all states to do more to bring on new states parties.

We have even lost a State Party with Lithuania's withdrawal. The act may be legal, but it is still deeply problematic. Yes, the security situation has changed in Europe, **but cluster munitions have not**. They are still indiscriminate and inhumane; they still harm civilians far more than soldiers. So if use is wrong by one actor, it is wrong for all. There can be no exceptions to this rule.

Second, we need sustained support for affected communities. Affected countries are working hard to clear their land and to provide risk education so people can live, work and play without fear. But they often need greater, more reliable, and longer-term funding – from donors and national budgets - to make greater progress. We must ensure no State Party in need of support is left behind.

Third, survivors and affected communities must remain at the heart of our efforts and of decision-making.

For survivors, support does not end when emergency treatment is completed. We need long-term access to rehabilitation, psychological and social support, education, employment and opportunities to rebuild our lives with dignity.

And we need real, meaningful inclusion. We should not only be invited to tell our stories. Our experience should also help shape policies, programmes and priorities. Survivors bring a perspective that cannot be fully captured by statistics or reports. We know directly what these weapons can do to individuals, families and communities, and how best to support all victims.

In closing, Mr. President, esteemed colleagues, I would like to remind us all why this work matters.

Behind every contaminated piece of land, behind every statistic, behind every policy discussion, there are people.

There are survivors. There are families. There are children.

My story is personal, but it is not unique.

That is why I am here today. To remind us that this Convention is not only about weapons, treaties or meetings. **It is about people. It is about dignity. And, above all, it is about preventing future suffering.**

We cannot change what happened to us in the past.

But together, we can help ensure that fewer people experience the same pain in the future.

Let us leave Vientiane with a renewed sense of determination to stop the suffering and to **keep this Convention strong.**

Thank you very much.