

CMC Statement on Universalization
Third Review Conference, Convention on Cluster Munitions
Vientiane Capital, 14-18 September 2026

Thank you, Mr. President.

The Cluster Muniton Coalition was thrilled to witness Timor Leste's commitment to accede ceremony today and warmly welcomes Timor Leste to this community of countries protecting civilians by rejecting cluster munitions.

We also once again congratulate Vanuatu, South Sudan, and Nigeria on joining the convention since the last Review Conference and welcome the positive news from the DRC. Each and every new State Party strengthens the norm and deepens the stigma associated with these horrific weapons.

We also welcome the efforts of the Lao PDR, Costa Rica and Norway as well as other committed States Parties to promote universal adherence to the Convention and its norms. But we meet at this Review Conference with a very mixed picture of progress.

While we celebrate the arrival of these new States Parties, we believe there should be many more by now. As the ambassador of France said earlier, in conversations with states outside the convention, we often hear of strong support for its principles and no clear reason for staying away beyond the practical challenges of passing a law. And the 12 remaining signatories should have ratified it many years ago.

Not only are we struggling to bring new states on board, but for the first time in the Convention's history, we have lost a State Party with Lithuania's withdrawal in 2025.

The departure has been met with resounding disapproval by dozens of States Parties since 2024, and we expect these views to be referenced in the Conference's outcome documents with reference to Lithuania by name in order to be most clear and accurate. By both publicly expressing deep regret about Lithuania's withdrawal but also celebrating the achievements and positive power of the Convention, we hope all States Parties will remain strongly committed to the Convention and others will be motivated to join.

Mr. President, even with few new states parties, the power of the norm against cluster munitions remains clear.

At the UN General Assembly last year, 138 states supported the resolution promoting the Convention, including 25 states not party.

The stigma remains strong - and it matters. Even states outside the Convention increasingly recognize that cluster munitions are an unacceptable weapon. In several recent incidents, states not party to the convention have accused others of using cluster munitions in order to cast a negative light on their adversaries. And the accused states tend to strongly deny allegations of use or production because of the stigmatization the Convention has created.

But the stigma is also being tested.

The use of cluster munitions - and the harm they cause - has been on the rise. Russia is making a mockery of the norm, producing and using cluster munitions on a scale unseen for decades. In addition, as reported in the *Cluster Munition Monitor*, in recent years there has been documented use of cluster munitions by Iran, Myanmar, Thailand and Ukraine, as well as reports of use by a small number of other states and non state armed groups.

Eighteen states outside the Convention either still produce cluster munitions, retain the capacity to produce them, or have not formally committed never to produce them again. The Monitor found evidence of production during this reporting period in nine countries: China, India, Israel, Myanmar, North Korea, Poland, Romania, Russia and South Korea. In a significant new development, Israel recently signed a three-year contract to produce and transfer cluster munitions to the United States.

The CMC is also extremely concerned about recent transfers, including the proposed transfer of almost 50,000 US-origin cluster munitions from Türkiye to Ukraine, including 10 million submunitions. These cluster munitions come from old stockpiles, and it is deeply disturbing that these aging and obsolete weapons with questionable reliability will now be used in combat instead of being destroyed.

Evidence also emerged suggesting that North Korea recently transferred cluster munitions to Russia, and these were used in Ukraine in 2025.

These developments make universalization of both the Convention and its norms even more urgent.

All use of cluster munitions by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances, must be unequivocally condemned. There can be no exceptions and no double standards. We have been pleased to hear this sentiment echoed by many countries this week.

We must also discourage the acts that enable and facilitate future use, including development, production, and transfer, as well as foreign stockpiling and transit.

The duty to discourage use is an obligation of all States Parties.

We therefore call on States Parties to ensure that these principles are reflected clearly and consistently throughout the Review Conference's outcome documents.

Looking to the next five years, this community should re-double our efforts to achieve full universalization.

For over 15 years, CMC campaigners in every region have worked to bring states on board - through direct advocacy, dialogue, regional meetings, public events, awareness-raising and creative campaigning. We will continue.

And we are grateful for the close partnership of states, ICRC, and others in our work. In this regard, we welcome the strong statements of the universalization co-chairs this morning as well as the practical suggestions laid out in their paper on universalization.

We also welcome the strong basis for action provided by the draft Vientiane Capital Action Plan. But, as always, implementation will be key. Every State Party has an obligation to promote universal adherence to the Convention and its norms.

We need sustained, strategic and coordinated outreach - globally, regionally and bilaterally. We need States Parties to use their relationships with neighbours, allies and partners at senior and ministerial levels. And we need persistent, long-term follow-up, with close coordination among all actors to ensure maximum effectiveness.

Often, universalization means simply knocking on the same door, with the same message, again and again - but by different actors, at different levels and at the right moments. And such efforts much be coordinated to be effective.

We should also explore new approaches. The use of special envoys, for example, has helped the Mine Ban Treaty open doors that might otherwise have remained closed. In these challenging times, this Convention should be equally ambitious and innovative.

Mr. President, sixteen years ago, when we gathered here in Vientiane for the historic First Meeting of States Parties, the CMC's message was simple: *Get on board!*

We have come a long way since then. But we are still far from our goal: a world where cluster munitions no longer cause unacceptable harm.

So today our message is: *Stop the Harm - Stand Up for the Ban.*

Keep up the pressure. Defend the norm. Bring others on board. Until all states join. Until all use ends. Until all harm stops.

Thank you.