



Statement of H.E. Archbishop Ettore Balestrero, Head of Delegation of the Holy See at the Third Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions
Agenda Item 9 (e) - Review of the operation and status of the Convention
and other matters important for achieving the aims of the Convention
Victims Assistance
Vientiane, 15 September 2026

Mr. President,

Since the Convention on Cluster Munitions entered into force, it has achieved significant progress and made a real difference in the lives of many people, as well as in preventing others from becoming victims, thanks to the combined contributions and synergies between different stakeholders.

However, the deadly legacy of cluster munitions continues to impact many innocent persons, who suffer the consequences of conflict long after the cessation of hostilities.

The Holy See is deeply concerned about the continued use of cluster munitions, and the growing number of civilian lives they are costing. There is no time to waste, precisely because each and every human life is of inestimable value, whether that of a soldier, a civilian, a woman or a child, as it is a gift from God.

The Holy See is close to those affected. It strives to ensure that they do not feel alone, and that their suffering does not go unseen or forgotten. In this regard, it is worth recalling that the Convention “adopts a broad definition of cluster munitions victims, including persons directly impacted, their families and communities, and requests States Parties to provide them with assistance.”¹

Preserving life at all its stages and creating the conditions for an existence worthy of the human person lies at the heart of humanitarian assistance. Therefore, it is fundamental to continue placing the human person at the center in order to guarantee integral assistance.

My Delegation welcomes the increased attention being given to the mental health and psychosocial support. Together with the religious and spiritual accompaniment for victims and their families, these issues have often been overlooked. Such assistance should not be limited to the allocation of financial aid. It must enable people to take charge of their own integral human development.

Mr. President,

The spirit of this Convention essentially lies in partnership and cooperation, and these should also respect the values and cultures of affected populations. Accordingly, it is crucial that States Parties listen victims’ voices and that they fully include them in the implementation of the Convention.

¹ Cf. Declaration of the Holy See upon ratification of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, 3 December 2008.

As Pope Leo XIV affirms, “[g]iving space to the perspectives and voices of victims through communication and education helps us to become aware of the abyss of evil inherent in war, and generally in all forms of violence. It helps us to reject the normalization of conflict; not to turn away when human dignity is violated; and to restore to victims the dignity of being recognized and heard.”² This is essential to ensure that their needs are properly addressed and their rights effectively upheld.

Thank you, Mr. President.

² Pope Leo XIV, Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas*, 217.