

HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT - NATIONAL STATEMENT - AUSTRALIA

Mr President

Allow me to begin by thanking Croatia for hosting us in Dubrovnik for this First Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and for its hard work coordinating both substance and logistics to ensure that we could all gather this week for this landmark event.

I would also like to congratulate Costa Rica on its excellent work as President of the 5th Meeting of States Parties.

And I would like to thank Sara Sekkenes for her tireless work as Executive Coordinator for the President of the CCM and congratulate Sheila Mweeba on her appointment as Director of the new Implementation Support Unit.

Mr President

It is my great pleasure to participate in this, the First Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Australia was proud to be a part of the negotiations in Dublin in 2008 which after protracted negotiations produced the text of the Convention.

At that time Australia, along with a great many other countries, felt that the time had come for the international community to negotiate a treaty which had at its core a strong humanitarian objective. And in pursuit of that objective, states were able to agree to the text of the Convention on Cluster Munitions which prohibits the use, development, production and transfer of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians.

Mr President

Australia is strongly supportive of efforts to universalise the Convention. The greater the number of states that are party to the Convention - the greater its humanitarian impact. In addition to funding mine action, Australia has promoted the universalisation of the Convention in international fora, bilaterally and through financial support of international agencies also involved in this work.

In recognition of the humanitarian impact of the cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war, the Australian Government, under its Mine Action Strategy for the Australian Aid Program 2010-2014 contributed over \$125 million Australian dollars to reduce the threat and socio-economic impact of landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war.

Mr President

The Convention established a framework to manage the storage and destruction of stockpiles, clearance, risk reduction education, victim assistance and international cooperation.

Australia thanks Mexico for their hard work and support during our period as co-coordinators on victim assistance. We welcome Chile as the new coordinator and look forward to developing a productive working relationship. Given Australia's role as co-coordinator, we will have more to say on victim assistance later in the Conference.

Mr President

This Conference provides us with an excellent opportunity to review efforts so far to implement and universalise the Convention. It also provides us with an opportunity to chart the path of our future activities. The review of the Vientiane Action Plan and finalising the Dubrovnik Action Plan provide important opportunities to maintain the impetus of the work of the Convention.

And while much has been done, there is still much to do to fully implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We encourage a renewed focus on encouraging and supporting States Parties to meet their obligations under the Convention.

Mr President

Given the strength of our commitment to this Convention, we regret that we have to raise again the concerns we have already expressed on numerous occasions in Geneva with the language in the Dubrovnik Declaration.

At the Dublin Conference in 2008, Australia and 20 other countries helped to develop the language in Article 21 of the Convention. This Article preserves the ability of States Parties to cooperate militarily with states who may not be party to the convention, while at the same time working hard to build up the norm against the use of cluster munitions and promoting universalisation of the convention to eventually rid the world of these weapons. These all remain important goals for us.

The interoperability provisions in Article 21 enabled a number of states, including Australia, to join the Convention, strengthening its reach and universality.

It is for this reason that we are very concerned that consensus language from previous political declarations was abandoned in early July of this

year. The new language, developed by several states, does not allow for the cooperation expressly permitted under Article 21.

In informal consultations in Geneva and here, we and others have made numerous efforts to provide alternative language to better reflect the text and intent of the Convention – not to weaken its norms, as some others have suggested.

We regret that no compromise has been found that might allow us to fully endorse the Dubrovnik Declaration. However, we look forward to working together on the Dubrovnik Action Plan.

Mr President

We thank again the Government of Croatia for hosting us here in Dubrovnik and the many people who have been involved in organising this conference. We also acknowledge the commitment and dedication of States Parties to the Convention, the United Nations, Cluster Munitions Coalition and the ICRC for their work in support of the Convention.