

Check against delivery (7/09/2015)

First Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions

Dubrovnik-7-11/09/2015

KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Mr. President,

Let me first congratulate you on your appointment as President of the First Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

I would like to stress my deep appreciation for the role your country, you and your team played throughout the Oslo process.

I wholeheartedly thank the Government of Croatia for hosting this meeting in this historic and beautiful city of Dubrovnik.

I would also like to commend the work accomplished by Costa-Rica in its capacity as President of the 5th Meeting of States Parties.

We associate ourselves with the statement made by the EU during this general debate and would like to add the following considerations.

Mr President,

Belgium was the 1rst country in the world to adopt a legislation banning cluster munitions in June 2006 even before the Oslo Convention was negotiated. Since then Belgium has continued to invest actively in the fight against cluster munitions and joined the efforts of governments and NGO's that led to the signature of the Convention.

Universalization remains a challenge. Belgium attaches the greatest importance to reaching a wide ban on cluster munitions. The need for further universalization clearly remains one of the priorities – not only to make sure that new states enter the Convention but also that states who remain outside the convention will eventually behave to the letter and the spirit of the Convention.

While it is obvious that more and more actors, including in the military environment, appear to be willing to show at least restraint and prudence in their military planning, we should remain conscious of **the fragility and possible reversibility** of these effects of what we call the stigmatization of cluster munitions as inhumane weapons.

All State parties need to act to promote the universalization of the Convention as provide for in its art.21 and Belgium will continue to do so.

Belgium condemns any use of cluster munitions by anyone.

Mr. President,

Contributing to the **destruction of cluster munitions and to projects on victim assistance** are also two guidelines of Belgium's action.

In the past 5 years, between 2010 and 2014, my country disbursed **almost €20 million on assistance** related with mine-action and other unexploded ordnance like cluster-munitions. 30% of this budget was spent on victim-assistance projects. This amount does not include the participation of the Belgian armed forces in the UNIFIL mission in Lebanon. Between 2007 and ending in December 2014 Belgian demining units detected and destroyed more than 15.000 submunitions and mines, that is about 40% of the entire demining-effort of UNIFIL.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Implementing the obligations of the State Parties is essential and I would like to underline among them the obligation, and importance, of **reporting under article 7**, as its ultimate goal is to have a clear view of the situation in the State Party, of their objectives, priorities and of their possible assistance needs.

Reports with improved quality of information represent a good source for presenting planned implementation measures in line with compliance requirements and in identifying associated resource needs. As such, the annual transparency reports can be used as a management tool for implementation, especially in supporting cooperation and assistance among States.

For the last five years, Belgium has been engaged in promoting the importance of Article 7 reporting as management tool and in working out measures to increase both the quality as the quantity of submitted reports. We believe that the exchange of information is crucial for the success of the Convention.

Belgium would like to congratulate **Mrs. Sheila MWEEMBA** as ISU director. We're looking ahead towards a fruitful cooperation.

We also would like **to thank the civil society** for their engagement and leadership in this field, without which we would not be sitting here today.

Mr President,

I'd like to conclude in thanking you again for hosting this meeting and in wishing you a full success for this 1st Review Conference.

Thank you, Mr President.