



Statement by South Africa at the First Review Conference to the
Convention on Cluster Munitions
Dubrovnik, Croatia

Mr President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset allow me to congratulate you on your election as the President of the First Review Conference to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). With your able leadership and experience, we are certain that this will be a successful Review Conference. I do not think we could ask for a more beautiful setting or gracious hosts than Croatia. Let me also take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Croatian Government for the warm hospitality extended to my delegation in this picturesque city of Dubrovnik, the pearl of Croatia.

Mr President,

The harm caused by weapons such as cluster munitions has been discussed from as early as the 1960's and 1970's and today we gather as concerned States again in 2015 at this First Review Conference to reflect and take stock of the progress that has been made in the implementation of the provisions of the Convention. Croatia has been a champion of the Cluster Munitions Convention and we wish to thank you for your continued leadership in the work of this Convention. We are sure that many States can learn a lot from your expertise and experience.

The Convention already has many success stories for a fairly young Convention. As of 31 August 2015, a total of 117 States have joined the Convention, 95 as States Parties and 22 as Signatory States. This constitutes three-fifths of the Member States of the UN. Five States Parties that were contaminated with cluster munitions have completed

their clearance obligations and twenty-three States Parties have completed their Article 3 destruction obligations, with more than 80% of stockpiles having already been destroyed. This brings us much closer to our goal of a world-free of cluster munitions. It is important for us to celebrate these successes, but also to acknowledge that we still have our work cut out for us.

Mr President,

South Africa was proud to announce that on the 28th May we became the 92nd State Party to the CCM; we wish to take this opportunity to once again thank everyone who assisted us in achieving this goal and a special thank you to civil society for their assistance. And to continue the good news, we heartily welcome Iceland, Rwanda and Slovakia to the Cluster Munitions family.

Despite this progress, we still have many challenges that lie ahead of us, bearing in mind that 11 States Parties have reported still being contaminated with cluster munitions remnants and with reports that as many as 38 States are affected by contamination or suspected contamination by cluster munitions remnants. This contamination not only results in injury and death, but also has a wide range of social and economic impacts, such as the displacement of people and hampering economic development. It is important that we continue to stigmatise the use of cluster munitions as a weapon of war. South Africa therefore condemns the use of cluster munitions by any State or entity and also calls upon others to do so. The use of cluster munitions has a negative effect on the livelihoods of civilians, particularly those who live in affected areas, even long after the cessation of conflict.

Mr President,

The rate of ratifications and accessions has increased recently, but we still remain concerned about the progress towards Universalisation of the Convention. South Africa continues to be concerned about the lack of ratification by those States that hold large stockpiles of cluster munitions and calls for intensified efforts to bring into the fold those that have not yet joined, in order to achieve our goal of a cluster munitions free-world. We support the aim as set out in the Dubrovnik Action Plan to increase the number of States Parties to 130 by the second Review Conference.

As a former producer of cluster munitions, South Africa believes that these weapons have not only become irrelevant as weapons in modern warfare, but that their use in current internal conflicts, has led civilians to being killed or displaced as a result of continued use. The Convention enters into force for South Africa on 1 November, at which time we will start implementing our plans to destroy our relatively small stock of aircraft-delivered cluster bombs and artillery-delivered cluster shells. South Africa will make every effort to complete the destruction of its stocks within the set deadline. The South African Conventional Arms Control Authority (NCACC), in terms of relevant legislation, vets all export applications and prohibits the development, production, exportation and any form of transfer of cluster munitions.

Check against delivery

Mr President,

At this Review Conference, we need to reemphasize that the victims and survivors of cluster munitions face a number of challenges including, among others, reintegration, inadequate medical emergency and on-going medical care services, lack of accessibility to some victims, especially those in remote areas, lack of physical and psychosocial support, as well as discrimination in the job market. It is particularly the former aspects, namely the reintegration of survivors into society and allowing them the opportunity to lead normal lives, which requires our continued attention.

Regarding international cooperation and assistance, it remains a vital area of the Convention, as we believe that it forms the key to full implementation of the Convention. Many of the severely affected States Parties face significant challenges regarding implementation. We thank those States and organisations that have already provided assistance to States Parties and call upon those who are in a position to offer assistance, to kindly do so.

Mr President,

In closing, we appreciate the work that has gone into the preparation of the outcome documents for this Review Conference, such as the Dubrovnik Action Plan, the Political Declaration and the Post-first Review Conference programme of meetings and machinery. The forward looking priorities set out in the Dubrovnik Action Plan will greatly assist in the timely implementation of the Convention for the next five years.

South Africa will continue to play an active role in partnership with other States and members of civil society towards the achievement of a cluster munitions free world!

I thank you, Mr President.