

The way forward

Thank you co-chairs,

Since this is the first time my delegation takes the floor during the meeting, let me first of all thank Norway, Foreign Minister Store and Ambassador Kongstad for the excellent work done in organizing this meeting in such short notice.

The main task of this sixth and last session is to actually trying to put into words what we see as the future steps that need to be taken in the process we start here today, in order to fulfill what we have set out to do in the next two years.

I think it is safe to say that the first five sessions of the Conference have clearly shown that everyone in this room agrees on the need to address the humanitarian impact of the use of cluster munitions, even if we don't necessarily see eye to eye on which venue to use to tackle this problem. We've had very good presentations by a diverse group of participants that managed to concisely present the magnitude of the challenges posed by cluster munitions, the complexities entailed in dealing with the problem in the field, the need for cooperation in addressing this issue and the different opportunities we have of transforming the current challenge into effective political action, which of course translates into the need to initiate discussions on the scope and design of a future legally binding international instrument.

The complexity of the issue, its numerous and diverse technical details, the different definitions related to the many aspects of the challenges posed by cluster munitions are not called into question. But we need to remain focused on the fact that this is about human lives, this is about the inhumane nature of cluster munitions, however technically proficient you can actually manage to make them.

We also need to steer away from the sterile discussions regarding the appropriate forum to deal with the issue. What this Conference is all about, and we would like to salute the courage and leadership shown by our hosts, is to start a process that has a clear objective with a set and ambitious timeline. Human nature being what it is, we need that clarity of purpose to drive us to rise to the occasion and address, as quickly as possible, the humanitarian impact of the use of cluster munitions. We need to reach an agreement quickly on an instrument that will prohibit the production, use, transfer of cluster munitions that cause harm to civilians. That international instrument would also need to include an

integrated approach aimed at destroying stockpiles of cluster munitions, clear affected areas and assist victims in an effective and cooperative manner.

The landmine convention is a useful precedent that proves that when a committed group of countries, even a small number, starts working on something which public opinion has already shown its dislike to, it quickly attracts others.

If the issue is addressed in other for a as well, so much the better, but recent events have lead us to believe that the Norwegian approach is the correct approach, calling upon every country to step up to the challenge and deal with it as expeditiously as possible. Is there such a thing as an acceptable harm to civilians? My country does not believe so and is fully committed to exploring productive means to future negotiations. Let us be clear about the purpose of our engagement when we adopt the Oslo Declaration: a negotiation process that in a specified amount of time will produce a legally binding international instrument on cluster munitions. The Oslo Conference is only the first step towards that goal.

The Declaration we are thus adopting as the final outcome document of the Conference is the public political commitment we all make that we will work hard towards achieving that goal. It sets the tone for what we are about to embark upon and defines the measure of our success in clear terms.

In that sense, it is my pleasure to announce that Peru has decided to organize the next meeting of this process, the Oslo Process, on 23 – 25 May 2007, to continue our work, or should I say to start the productive work of fleshing out the future instrument on cluster munitions. We hope to see you all in Lima very soon.

Thank you.