

Universal meeting on the Convention on Cluster Munitions

Remarks by Ireland on procedural matters for the first Meeting of the States Parties

Santiago, Monday 7 June 2010

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here in Santiago, and would like to take this opportunity to extend the thanks of my delegation to the Government of Chile for kindly hosting this important Conference. Ireland is grateful to the Lao PDR for the request to act as Friend of the Chair on the preparatory process, including procedural matters, and it is in that capacity that I speak to you today.

As you will recall, Ireland hosted and chaired the negotiating Conference which adopted the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and arranged for its deposit with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Arising from this, we have carried out a number of procedural functions in relation to the Convention since its adoption, and will continue to do so, in close cooperation with the Lao PDR and other partners, during the remainder of the period leading up to the first Meeting of States Parties.

For example, in October 2008 we submitted a draft resolution to the UN General Assembly, which was necessary in order to authorise the UN Secretary-General to undertake various administrative tasks assigned to him under the Convention. We were pleased that, notwithstanding the reservations which certain States have about the Convention, this resolution was adopted by consensus.

In October 2009, this time together with the Lao PDR, we submitted a further draft resolution to the UN General Assembly. This welcomed the offer of the Lao PDR to host the first Meeting of States Parties. The States which had been reticent about a resolution in 2008 were even more so when presented with a second resolution on the subject, but thanks to the hard work of our Lao colleagues and other friends, this resolution was also adopted by consensus.

As a formal request to the Secretary-General was needed in order to begin preparations by the United Nations for the Meeting of States Parties in Vientiane, in March of this year we coordinated the preparation and submission of a letter on behalf of the States which had ratified or approved the Convention. This requested the Secretary-General to convene the meeting in Vientiane on the dates in November which you all know. It also asked him to convene a preparatory meeting in Geneva on 6 September. The holding of such a preparatory meeting will greatly facilitate the holding of the first Meeting of States Parties, by allowing some procedural, financial and other administrative matters to be dealt with in advance.

Further to this letter, the UN Secretary-General issued a note last month convening the First Meeting of States Parties in Vientiane in November, and announcing that the preparatory meeting will take place in Geneva on 6 September.

The main purpose of the preparatory meeting will be to put in place the procedural foundations for the Meeting of States Parties. It should agree on draft agenda, rules of procedure and programme of work of the Meeting of States Parties, though these will of

course have to be formally adopted by the Meeting of States Parties itself. It should also approve the cost estimates for the Meeting of States Parties.

Given that the preparatory meeting will be of only one day in duration, the time available for substantive work will be limited, but it is our hope that there will be time for an initial discussion of all substantive issues. It is important to bear in mind that this meeting will be the first time that the States Parties to the Convention will have had an opportunity to meet together as States Parties, in other words following the Convention's entry into force. It is very important that, as we begin the collective work of the States Parties to the Convention, all feel that they are participating on an equal footing. While much useful work has already been done to identify issues which will need to be dealt with in Vientiane, and while our informal discussions here this week will contribute further to our shared understanding of these issues, we should be careful not to prejudge anything or to trespass on the prerogatives of States Parties. This will be important in order to ensure a constructive atmosphere at the preparatory meeting and later at the Meeting of States Parties.

As I mentioned, the preparatory meeting should agree on draft agenda, rules of procedure and programme of work of the Meeting of States Parties. We will prepare drafts of these documents, in cooperation with our Lao colleagues, and circulate them well in advance of the preparatory meeting. It is important to bear in mind that Article 11 of the Convention specifies certain issues for consideration at Meetings of States Parties. These will be taken into account in the preparation of the draft agenda, but it is, of course, also possible to include additional issues. We will, of course, be consulting with Lao colleagues in this regard, but all suggestions are welcome.

The draft programme of work and rules of procedure will, of course, also be prepared in close cooperation with the host country. I expect that these will follow the usual format for similar international meetings.

I thank you for your attention, and look forward to working with you all during the remainder of this Conference and during the months ahead. If anyone has any questions, my colleagues and I will be happy to address them at any stage during our meeting.

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