Cluster Munition Coalition Statement on Retention of Cluster Munitions
Convention on Cluster Munitions 3rd Meeting of the States Parties
Oslo, 12 September 2012

Thank you Mr. President.

At least 35 States Parties have expressed their view that there is no need to retain any live cluster munitions or explosive submunitions under Article 3. They have expressed this view in their transparency reports, in public statements, in letters to the Cluster Munition Monitor, or in their national implementation legislation. We strongly support this view.

Our demining experts believe that there are no compelling arguments for retaining live cluster munitions and submunitions for training purposes. To our knowledge, no clearance organisation accredited to the UN uses live submunitions for training. Indeed, high quality models or inert shapes certified “free from explosive” meet all the requirements for recognition and other training. Some states assert the need to retain live cluster munitions and submunitions for the development of counter-measures, while others believe it is not necessary. States Parties retaining for counter-measures purposes should be more explicit and detailed about their perceived requirement.

In our view, most if not all states should determine that the minimum number of cluster munitions necessary is zero.

We know of 11 States Parties that retain cluster munitions and four signatories that intend to do so. Others have not expressed an opinion on this issue yet or confirmed if they plan to retain cluster munitions. We encourage all those states that have not yet made their views known on retention to do so.

We appreciate the reports States Parties have already been making on past and planned use of cluster munitions for permitted purposes, as required by the Convention. So far in 2012, five States Parties have reported using retained cluster munitions for permitted purposes during the previous year: Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, and Spain. Meanwhile the Netherlands and the UK did not report consuming any for training and research. We hope to hear soon from Denmark, and more details from Sweden and Switzerland.

We encourage all states retaining cluster munitions to provide detailed information on how they have made use of them in the past and what the precise future requirements are. We are particularly interested to learn what recurring role live submunitions play in training activities for deminers and EOD personnel. Regular, comprehensive transparency reporting is the only way we can know if States Parties are actually keeping cluster munitions for permitted purposes, and therefore the reporting requirement must be taken very seriously. It would also be useful for signatories that submit voluntary Article 7 reports to include information on retention.

Thank you.