Good afternoon Excellencies, dear colleagues,

Costa Rica and the Cluster Munition Coalition are pleased to host this event today to lay out for you why cluster munitions have been banned under the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions, and why it is urgent for all states of the world to become part of the Convention.

As you may be aware, the Convention was created because of the suffering that cluster munitions have inflicted on civilians during and long after conflicts, and because of the potential for them to do far more harm if not stopped. So far 114 states have joined the Convention on Cluster Munitions. These states have determined that such weapons should not be part of a modern state’s arsenal and have chosen to support global efforts under international humanitarian law to promote peace and security for all.

Costa Rica is a proud member of this group of states that has forever rejected cluster munitions. And we are extremely honored that Central America is now the first cluster munition-free sub-region of the world after Belize acceded to the Convention last month. Costa Rica is also President of the Convention this year after hosting and presiding over the 5th Meeting of States Parties in San Jose in September. It was an energetic meeting where many States Parties made positive announcements about progress they are making to implement their duties to destroy stockpiles, clear their land of cluster munition remnants, and provide support to victims.

At the same time, we need to see more progress on two important fronts.

First, we are continuing to see use of cluster munitions in a small number of states outside the convention, most significantly in Syria, where widespread use has led to almost 2000 victims already, but also in the recent fighting in Ukraine. While these states are not bound by the convention, we strongly believe that the day has come for all states to stop using cluster munitions. We therefore have raised our concern about such use and we urge all states to continue to loudly condemn all use of cluster munitions until it stops. This is a legal duty for States Parties to the treaty, and a moral duty for all states.

Second, the fact that cluster munitions are still unfortunately being used makes it all the more urgent for membership of the Convention to continue to grow. Each state that joins the Convention builds the strength of the norm against cluster munitions and increases the community of states working for their ultimate elimination. We call on states that have signed the treaty to make ratification an urgent priority. And we ask states still outside the Convention to join quickly in order to make clear your opposition to the unacceptable humanitarian impact that cluster munitions cause. You have the support of Costa Rica in your endeavors to achieve this goal - a goal we urge you to reach within this year of Costa Rica’s presidency of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We know that together we can stop cluster munitions.