

Holy See Address on Cluster Bomb Ban

"New Chapter in International Humanitarian Law"

DUBLIN, Ireland, JUNE 6, 2008 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Here is the English-language address Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, the Holy See's permanent observer at the U.N. offices in Geneva, gave May 30 at last week's International Diplomatic Conference on Cluster Munitions in Dublin.

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Mr. President,

The protection and care of the victims of cluster munitions, the prevention of their suffering, and the addition of a related new chapter in international humanitarian law, have been clear and compelling objectives of the Holy See from the very beginning of the Process that has led to this Diplomatic Conference. These goals have been achieved.

The success of the Conference is due to the convergent efforts of all participants whose good will and their primary concern for the dramatic condition of many victims, and the victims' families and communities, have moved them to take decisive action.

My Delegation recognises with great appreciation the invaluable contribution of everyone and wants to underline in particular the leadership role that you Mr. President have effectively exercised with the support of your capable team and the full weight of the Irish Government.

Among the many voices raised in the world on behalf of the victims of cluster munitions, of peace and development in the countries affected but stifled by these terrible weapons, there has been that of Pope Benedict XVI who called for "a strong and credible international instrument".

Moving along this path, many countries as well as non governmental organisations and individuals, have engaged with determination and a sense of solidarity and compassion, in hard work for a Convention on cluster munitions. The Process has steadily progressed from Oslo, to Lima, to Vienna, to Wellington and finally to Dublin.

Mr. President,

Among the positive results reached allow me to highlight three of them. First, the new Convention opens up a wider care for victims of cluster munitions by including their families and communities. It also calls on the sense of solidarity of the international community to assume responsibility for their psychological and material assistance and for the clearance of the territories contaminated by these munitions.

Second, the new Convention recognises "the specific role and contribution of relevant actors" (article 5.2(c)). Indeed many actors are providing care to the victims as well as human, financial and technical cooperation in

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the different activities called for by this Convention: State parties, United Nations bodies, International Organisations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the civil society. In this connection, we would like to put on record our understanding and interpretation of article 5.2(c): when a State party develops a national plan and budget to carry out assistance activities according to the Convention "with a view to incorporating them within the existing national disability, development and human rights frameworks and mechanisms", it shall guarantee the pluralism that is inherent in any democratic society and the diversity of relevant non governmental actors. This respectful form of coordination of the various activities of governmental and non governmental actors is in line with what the Preamble states (PP 10).

Third, the new Convention is an achievement in itself but also a positive message to pursue efforts by the international community in the overall disarmament and arms control negotiations. The task is not concluded. In fact, now begins the challenge of implementing this instrument and directing material and human resources towards works of peace, solidarity and development.

Mr President,

The Delegation of the Holy See cannot conclude without stating once again how much it values the spirit of partnership shared with the members of the Core Group and of all other Delegations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the Cluster Munitions Coalition.

The spirit of partnership has sustained the process successfully concluded, a success that was not assured when a handful of States started it. That same spirit can ensure an equally successful implementation and a hopeful future for victims and affected countries.

Thank You Mr. President.

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