



Convention on Cluster Munitions Signing Conference

2-4 December 2008, Oslo, Norway

Ban Advocates Statement

Oslo, 4 December 2008

Delivered by Berihu Mesele, Dusica Vuckovic and Soraj Ghulam Habib

Berihu Mesele, Ethiopia:

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, fellow campaigners and survivors, my name is Berihu, this is Dusica and this is Soraj.

We speak in the name of our colleagues and friends, the Ban Advocates, a group of people who have been affected by cluster munitions. I am sure this group that you can see behind me has become familiar to everyone who has been participating in the Oslo process.

We come from Albania, Afghanistan, Croatia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Lebanon, Lao PDR, Viet Nam, Serbia, Tajikistan and the United States of America.

It is an honour for us to be here before you today. We are proud of this treaty and particularly of the victim assistance provisions. You all have made a difficult decision, but it is the right decision.

On behalf of all survivors, we stand here to thank you, to thank each and all of you, who have made this treaty a reality.

Dusica Vuckovic, Serbia:

When we started the Oslo process we had received nothing except pain and suffering, but we hoped that one day we would have a Convention with strong victim assistance provisions.

In fact, these provisions are invaluable to me as a wife of a cluster munition survivor and to my children. I am sure these provisions will be invaluable to thousands of other families since after ratification and full implementation they will bring the safety and dignity which is necessary in our daily lives.

At the beginning of the Ban Advocates project I was the only woman, an indirect victim of cluster munitions, actively participating at conferences. During every conference I would share again and again the most difficult moments of my life.

Besides my husband who was injured, I met many survivors and members of their families and we shared our suffering: we had to cope with the consequences of our tragedies all alone, without any assistance. It is difficult to express how tough this was for us all. While our family members were in hospitals we were fighting and managing to live as we could.

Today the situation has changed. We can say that today is an historical day because the provisions on victim assistance will make our lives easier in all aspects.

Soraj Ghulam Habib, Afghanistan:

We believe Article 5 will make a real change in our lives. The question is no longer how assistance will be provided, but how quickly this assistance will be put in place. Please take urgent action now! Our Convention should not remain a piece of paper.

Today I am 17 years old. I do not want to wait years until I am an old man to receive assistance in my community or to be able to get a job. People who are injured by cluster bombs should be able to receive emergency assistance and not be left to die in a hospital like I was until my father saved me.

To do this we need countries to develop victim assistance national plans and budgets, including timeframes; to designate a VA focal point; to start collecting data and take steps to mobilize resources. We ask you to keep your promise. We, the Ban Advocates, are ready to work with you from tomorrow.

Thank you for signing the Convention to prevent the loss of more innocent lives and to give us our rights.