



Convention on Cluster Munitions Signing Conference

2-4 December 2008, Oslo, Norway

Opening statement by Thomas Nash, Coordinator, CMC

Oslo, 3 December 2008

Today we celebrate a victory that will affect many, many lives. This treaty will affect the lives of our friends, relatives and colleagues but also the lives of people we will never meet. It is not often we have the privilege to make such an impact beyond our everyday lives. We should all cherish this moment.

This treaty has not come about because it was the mainstream, natural thing to do. It has come about because individual human beings decided together to fight against something, to struggle against a constant injustice and to overcome it.

Both on what we achieved and how we did it, this treaty reaffirms and builds on the standards set by the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that we celebrate today. Nobody should have any doubt now that we can reach concrete global solutions to problems that seem beyond us and that if we are going to succeed we need states and civil society working together, rejecting the easy ways out, refusing to accept what some say is 'realistic' and instead building a new reality that becomes accepted as the norm.

I remember two years ago people were still saying this ban couldn't happen. It's taken countless stunts, events, petitions, relentless badgering of journalists and parliamentarians, some courage, risk taking and cool nerves and of course two weeks locked in a Gaelic football stadium, but here we are. The success has come from so many invaluable individual contributions adding up to far more than the sum of the parts. It reminds us it is possible to change the status quo and we all have a responsibility to do it. It is simply wrong to justify inaction by saying it can't be done.

We worked on victim assistance to help the survivors we know. We worked on clearance to prevent more people suffering as our friends have. We worked on the definition to get a ban that ensures the same humanitarian harm and economic hardship will not be repeated. We worked on stockpile destruction to eliminate this weapon forever and never see it used again.

We did not work for these articles just to get the words on paper. If we continue the spirit of this Oslo Process and keep up the momentum with swift ratification in 2009 then we will turn these words on paper into real life change for the people who expect it of us. We in the Cluster Munition Coalition are confident that together we will do this and that's why 250 of us have come from 75 countries to be with our Norwegian partners in Oslo. We are all so proud to be here, we are grateful to Norway and all of you for making it happen and we urge you to join us for the long haul.

Thank you.