



Convention on Cluster Munitions Signing Conference

2-4 December 2008, Oslo, Norway

Statement by Khaled Yamout and Lamis Zein, Norwegian People's Aid Oslo, 4 December 2008

Stopping the use, production and transfer of cluster munitions is a massive achievement, an achievement that will ensure that human lives will be protected. Yet, stopping the use, production and trade is not enough by itself. Over 70 countries have millions if not billions of cluster bomblets in their stockpiles. Even worse, over 30 countries and areas are contaminated with these weapons, some very severely, with clearance missions going very slowly. These are the countries we should be focusing on, not those – as some have done – who are not here today.

These cluster bombs contaminating the lands of many countries are like predators waiting in silence for their next preys and the stockpiles are a potential hazard of becoming such predators.

I would like to give the floor to a colleague of mine, Ms. Lamis Zain, who has been working on clearing cluster munitions in Lebanon for around a year, to give us a brief idea of the complexity but necessity of the clearance activities.

Lamis Zein:

My name is Lamis Zein and I am a site supervisor for Norwegian People's Aid in south Lebanon. I am responsible for a team of 12 women who search for cluster bombs as part of the wider clearance effort.

A lot of people are still afraid even 2 years after the bombing, especially those with agricultural fields they are scared to go in, they need someone to clear the land. Worse still we are even searching in the back gardens of houses in Tibnine right now. Clearing everyday changes not only the searcher's life but changes many people's lives. If you clear one submunition it means you save 3 or 4 people's lives. It's a good job, it can be dangerous but it's exciting. At first we were scared to start work in live sites, but now we are happy when we find cluster bombs and we want to find more. I don't know if it's possible to clear Lebanon in 10 years, but if we continue like this and get more teams then we can do it inshallah. When you think about clearance work, remember that many of our children were killed, our men injured, lost their hands and legs; our families have lost many of their relatives. We need to live in peace. Lebanon is small but it is wonderful and we are so proud of our country at this historic event.

Khaled Yamout:

As we all heard, we cannot delay the clearance activities from taking place and we cannot allow the current stockpiles to become future sources of suffering. That is why meeting the deadlines stated for stockpile destruction and clearance is of utmost

importance. That is also why we want rapid entry into force so that the most important humanitarian obligations in the treaty start to take effect. And let us remember that the 8 year stockpile destruction deadline and the 10 year clearance deadline are maximum limits and that the obligation is to complete work as soon as possible. So countries must start early.

Meeting the deadlines should be a priority not only for concerned state parties but to all state parties of the convention. Every state that is a stockpiler or its land is contaminated with cluster munitions should exert all efforts within its powers to eliminate the threats of those weapons. States that are not directly concerned should provide any possible assistance to the concerned states in order to speed up the process.

Such assistance could be even strengthened by transparency reports submitted by state parties. These reports should not be looked at as a burden but as the sources required for all states to assess their situation and plan future steps. We hope states will support each other on the preparation of these transparency reports and we encourage all states to begin analyzing the reporting requirements in article 7 and taking steps to gather all relevant information.

We believe the deadlines stated in articles 3 and 4 are fair and we are sure that many states are capable of completing the tasks even before the deadlines stated and so, we urge all those who can to do so especially in terms of clearance because even though we have a very strong article on victim assistance, yet we do not want any new victims to make benefit of it.

Thank you.