



Opening remarks by Soraj Ghulam Habib, Ban Advocate, Cluster Munition Coalition

Global Conference on the Convention on Cluster Munitions, 7 June 2010, Santiago, Chile

Your Excellency Mr. Chair, Fellows, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have participated in the Oslo process since the very beginning, in 2007.

My name is Soraj Ghulam Habib and I am a cluster munition survivor from Afghanistan.

In 2002, when I was ten years old, I went with some of my family members and friends to a public park to celebrate Afghan New Year's Eve.

While I was walking home, I found a yellow can on the sidewalk. I thought there might be some food in it. I picked it up. As I opened it, it got hot and I threw it away. It exploded. I woke up and found myself lying on a bed. I had no legs.

I was devastated. My world had completely changed. I could never play as I wanted. My friends left me alone. I dropped out of school. For several years I hid away at home, and I did not see anyone from the community. My life had become one of darkness and isolation.

I am sharing my painful history to give you a picture of how *inhumane* weapons like cluster munitions and landmines are. As you can imagine, it is not easy for me to talk about my past. But for the sake of peace and safety for future generations, I am ready to talk about what happened to me, what I want, and what should be done for me and for other survivors.

I have traveled nearly 40 hours from Afghanistan to talk to you good people, and to share messages on behalf of cluster munitions survivors and my fellow Ban Advocates.

With the support of our peers, we have developed strength and determination, and have contributed to the process that has brought us here today.

The more support we have from the international community, the stronger we will become.

We strongly urge all the states to sign and ratify the convention on cluster munitions as soon as possible.

We call on States Parties to put the Convention on Cluster Munitions into practice, and to ensure that it has a positive and long term impact on survivors, and those living in affected communities.

We call on them to make sure victims are fully included in all aspects of bringing the Convention into practice, and to take every possible step to address the needs of victims as specified in Article 5 of the Convention.

We urge States Parties to increase international assistance to affected countries, to ensure they are capable of fulfilling their obligations.

Ban Advocate representatives from Afghanistan, Croatia, Ethiopia, the Lao PDR, Serbia and the United States of America bring with them their own stories and messages.

Upon hearing them, I am sure you will recognize how vital it is that the entire world unites behind the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Thank you very much.