Statement to First Committee
on the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Treaty and
on the Convention on Cluster Munitions

delivered by Zach Hudson on behalf of
International Campaign to Ban Landmines
&
Cluster Munition Coalition

October 29, 2013

Thank you Mr. Chair,

I am pleased to speak on behalf of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, a global network of non-governmental organizations in some hundred countries, working towards a mine-free world.

We welcome the references of support for the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty made by numerous delegations in their statements to the First Committee. These reaffirm our common commitment to the goal of eliminating antipersonnel landmines.

March 1, 2014, will mark fifteen years since the entry into force of the Mine Ban Treaty and later in the year the treaty’s Third Review Conference will take place. This treaty has proven to be a stellar example of humanitarian disarmament, citizen diplomacy, and multilateralism at work.

More than 80% of the world’s countries are on board of the Mine Ban Treaty as of today. Its real and far-reaching impact has been both immediate and long-lasting. This impact is clearly felt not only in the 161 countries that have banned the weapon, but even in the states that have yet to join the treaty. The stigma on the weapon holds so strong that most of those remaining outside the treaty abide by the ban norm. Many hundreds of square kilometers of contaminated land have been cleared of mines, and more than 46 million stockpiled landmines in 87 countries have been destroyed. Most importantly, the number of new casualties caused by landmines each year has dropped dramatically to fewer than 5,000 recorded cases, in comparison to over 20,000 at the beginning of 1990s. The Mine Ban Treaty is working.

Despite this remarkable progress, every day some 12 people are still killed or maimed by landmines or explosive remnants of war, showing that states need to work even harder to clear the land of these indiscriminate weapons and to assist victims and their communities. We are also extremely concerned that a tiny number of governments remaining outside of the treaty are still using antipersonnel landmines, including Myanmar and Syria most recently. The ICBL condemns any use of antipersonnel mines. In today’s world antipersonnel mines are unacceptable and all States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty and others who agree with its humanitarian objectives should strongly condemn all use and do all to prevent it in the future.
We have come a long way, but we need to finish the job we started to put a final end to these weapons. This can and should be achieved within years and not decades.

In order to achieve that, we are calling urgently for:
An immediate halt to the use of any antipersonnel landmines, anywhere by anyone;
The 36 remaining countries to join the Mine Ban Treaty without delay;
All countries, including affected states and donor states, to increase their efforts to clear land of mines and assist victims;

The international community will gather at the beginning of December in Geneva at the 13th Meeting of States Parties to the treaty and at the First Preparatory Meeting for the Third Review Conference. This will be followed by a milestone meeting of the treaty next year—the Third Review Conference that will be held in Maputo, Mozambique, from 30 June until 4 July 2014. The Review Conference will mark 15 years since the Treaty’s entry into force and will not only assess the progress made to date, but also provide a roadmap for our work ahead. We believe the Third Review Conference should be a starting point for the completion phase of the work remaining under the treaty. The conference host country itself—Mozambique—provides an inspiring example of how a heavily affected country has effectively tackled its landmine contamination and will become mine-free in 2014. With such examples, we are convinced that with genuine commitment and sufficient resources the remaining work under the treaty can be finished in the next several years, not decades.

We urge all states to take up the challenge of completing the job under the treaty and to come to Maputo next year with a public pledge to complete their remaining specific treaty obligations (such as clearance, victim assistance, stockpile destruction, or joining the treaty) within a clearly defined, ambitious deadline. We are not that far away from our goal of a mine-free world, but we do need all countries on board and genuine recommitment of efforts and resources to get the world rid of landmines in the shortest possible time. So come to Maputo next year with your completion pledge and fulfill your part in achieving a mine-free world.

Meanwhile, here in New York, all governments should support the resolution calling for full universalization and implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty. About half of the states that have not yet joined the treaty nonetheless annually vote in favor of the resolution in order to demonstrate their support for the treaty’s humanitarian objectives. It is time for those who continue to abstain, to start voting in favor, reflecting the nearly universal view that these weapons are a relic of the past and need to disappear from the face of the Earth, once and for all.

Thank you.

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Mr Chair, I am now addressing you on behalf of the Cluster Munition Coalition (or CMC), an international network of nongovernmental organizations working in over 100 countries to eradicate cluster munitions, prevent further causalities from these weapons and put an end for all time to the suffering they cause.

The 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions and its comprehensive ban is preventing untold harm to civilians. 113 countries have joined the convention, and we urge those remaining to do so without delay.
Safe in our environment here in this UN building, it is easy to feel far removed from the people this convention protects. Yet it continues to protect every one of us. As a preventative treaty, the Convention on Cluster Munitions has ensured the destruction of 122 million stockpiled submunitions to date and it is establishing a strong norm against the use of cluster munitions that helps to protect civilians worldwide in times of conflict.

The convention also protects the many millions of people living in post-conflict environments, through its obligations on countries to clear land contaminated with cluster munition remnants within ten years. The CMC firmly believes that if proper identification of cluster munition-contaminated areas is done, clearance is targeted to these areas, and states are generous with contributions of financial and technical resources, nearly all States Parties can finish clearance within the mandated period of 10 years or less, and will not need to request an extension. Via the partnership of governments, civil society, the UN, ICRC, operators and others committed to this convention, support is available for those states suffering the legacy of cluster munition contamination to identify and eliminate the threat remaining.

We welcome the important statements of concern and condemnation over the ongoing use of cluster munitions in Syria. We also welcome the 107 countries who voted in favour of the 8 May 2013 UN General Assembly 67/262 on the Situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, which included a condemnation of the use of cluster munitions by the Syrian authorities against the Syrian population. Continued condemnation against any use of cluster munitions is crucial, and we are pleased that countries both signatory and non-signatory to the Convention on Cluster Munitions continue to speak out. Yet this is not enough. Only through continued strengthening of the convention, through more countries ratifying and acceding to it, can we stop use of cluster munitions for good. We urge those non-signatory states to cement their condemnation of this indiscriminate weapon further by joining the Convention on Cluster Munitions without delay. States not yet in a position to join the convention can also take interim measures to demonstrate their political support for the convention, such as declaring a moratorium on use, production, export and acquisition of cluster munitions, destroying stockpiles, or clearing land of cluster munition remnants.

We welcome the statements of support for the Convention on Cluster Munitions made during this meeting – and urge all states, whether signatory or non-signatory, to continue to voice support for the treaty’s humanitarian objectives at every opportunity. For those states not yet in a position to accede to the convention, your words of condemnation against the weapon are important and powerful. For those that have already joined, please do not forget that promoting universalization of the convention is obliged under Article 21, and we will monitor states’ adherence to this obligation as we do all other articles.

We thank Norway for its leadership of the convention as President over the last year. We also thank the new President, Zambia, for hosting the successful Fourth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention last month. Universalisation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions is the CMC’s top priority and we are pleased that it has been chosen as the priority of the Zambian presidency over the coming year, and also that Norway will continue to promote it as coordinator on universalisation alongside Ghana. We look forward to supporting Chile in the upcoming Santiago Regional Conference on the convention being held 12-13th December. The exciting goal of the meeting is to encourage a cluster munition-free zone in Latin America and the Caribbean and we encourage all GRULAC member states to participate in the meeting and to join the challenge to
become the world’s first cluster munition-free zone. Next year’s Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions will be held in Costa Rica 2-5th September, and the Intersessional meeting will be held 7-9th April in Geneva. We look forward to welcoming many new States Parties to the convention ahead of these milestones, and we stand fully ready to provide assistance to reach this goal.

We know that each state still outside the convention has its unique reason for being so, but the CMC believes that none outweigh the value of joining and the responsibility to protect civilian lives. Here in New York, and in over 100 countries worldwide, our coalition members offer our resources, expertise, and also our continued time and dedication to support you in the year ahead and look forward to helping you join and implement the convention.

Thank you.