Mr. Chairman,

It is an honour for me to report on the Dublin Diplomatic Conference for the Adoption of a Convention on Cluster Munitions, which took place in Dublin from 19 to 30 May 2008. I do so in accordance with the decision of the Conference at its final meeting on Friday 30 May, as recorded in its Final Document.

This Conference was the culmination of a series of meetings in Oslo Lima and Vienna in 2007, and in Wellington in February 2008. The objective of these meetings, and of the Dublin Conference, as set out in the Oslo Declaration of 23 February 2007, was “to prohibit cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians”.

The Dublin Diplomatic Conference was attended by 127 States, with 107 attending as participants and 20 as observers. A large number of international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations also attended as observers.

The Conference was opened by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland, Micheál Martin, and, at its opening session, heard a video message from United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and an address from the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Dr. Jakob Kellenberger.

I had the honour of being nominated by the Government of Ireland as President of the Conference, and of being elected by the participating States to serve in that capacity. Representatives of the following eight countries were elected as Vice-Presidents: Chile, France, Hungary, Lebanon, Mauritania, Mexico, Norway and Zambia.
The work of the Conference took place in meetings of the Committee of the Whole and in bilateral and other informal consultations, including informal meetings convened by Friends of the President. I would like to acknowledge the importance of the contribution made by the Friends of the President, and to express my gratitude to the representatives of Australia, Austria, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa and Switzerland for their service in that capacity.

Mr. Chairman,

Following two weeks of intense work, the Dublin Diplomatic Conference adopted the Convention on Cluster Munitions, by consensus, on Friday 30 May. The Convention will be opened for signature in Oslo on 3 December this year, and will enter into force six months after the deposit of the thirtieth instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.

The main provisions of this Convention are as follows:

There is a comprehensive prohibition on the use, development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention and transfer of cluster munitions, as well as on assisting, encouraging or inducing anyone to engage in behaviour prohibited to a State Party.

Cluster munitions are defined for the purposes of the Convention. Weapons systems with certain characteristics, aimed at avoiding indiscriminate area effects and the risks posed by unexploded submunitions, are excluded from the definition and thus from the operative provisions applying to cluster munitions. Explosive bomblets that are specifically designed to be dispersed or released from dispensers affixed to aircraft are subject to the same prohibitions as cluster munitions.

The Convention contains obligations regarding the destruction of stockpiles of cluster munitions, and the clearance of cluster munition remnants from areas under the jurisdiction or control of a State Party. These obligations must be complied with as soon as possible and within certain prescribed deadlines, which may be extended where circumstances warrant it.

The Convention includes comprehensive provisions on assistance to cluster munition victims, as well as on international cooperation and assistance to States Parties with the fulfilment of their obligations. States Parties are obliged to report annually on the implementation of their obligations.

Article 21 of the Convention takes account of the fact that, at least initially, not all States will be party to the Convention and that some States not party may wish to continue to use cluster munitions. It permits States Parties, subject to certain restrictions, to engage in military cooperation and operations with such States.

Mr. Chairman,

It is a matter of particular satisfaction to my government that the Dublin Diplomatic Conference was able to reach an outcome by consensus.

I am also glad to be able to inform the General Assembly of the message addressed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Conference on the occasion of the adoption of the Convention, which was as follows:
"I am delighted that the strong calls to address the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions have been answered with the adoption today of this new Convention. I welcome this successful outcome of the Dublin Diplomatic Conference, and congratulate everyone who contributed to the process.

A broad-based coalition of States, international organisations and civil society has brought about a new international standard that will enhance the protection of civilians, strengthen human rights and improve prospects for development.

As Secretary-General of the United Nations, I am honoured to accept depositary functions under the Convention. In addition, the entire United Nations system stands ready to support and assist States Parties in implementing their treaty obligations. I therefore encourage States to sign and ratify this important agreement without delay, and I look forward to its rapid entry into force.”

The President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Jakob Kellenberger, addressing the Conference at its opening, quoted the St Petersburg Declaration of 1868, saying that, in renouncing the use of bullets that explode in the human body, the Declaration constituted the first prohibition of a weapon in modern international humanitarian law. He said that the International Military Commission that adopted that Declaration, in its own words, "fixed the technical limits at which the necessities of war ought to yield to the requirements of humanity", and noted that the challenge and responsibility before the Dublin Diplomatic Conference was to set those limits for cluster munitions in 2008.

The statement delivered on behalf of the International Committee of the Red Cross at the conclusion of the Conference concluded that the Conference had met the challenge referred to by President Kellenberger, and had “done so decisively on behalf of humanity”.

As I have mentioned, the Secretary-General of the United Nations has agreed to act as depositary of the Convention. Work has been undertaken during recent months to prepare authentic texts in the six official languages of the United Nations.

The text of the Convention as adopted, in English, French and Spanish, may be consulted on the website of the Dublin Diplomatic Conference, which is www.clustermunitionsdublin.ie. The Arabic, Chinese and Russian language versions have already been circulated to all UN Member States in draft form, and will be finalised shortly.

The delegation of Ireland has submitted the Final Document of the Dublin Diplomatic Conference for circulation as an official document of the General Assembly.

It is the hope and expectation of my government that the Convention done at Dublin on 30 May will attract wide adherence and will have a significant impact, both in terms of addressing the risks to civilians posed by existing cluster munition remnants and of preventing future use.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.