Background

1 August 2015 marked five years since the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) entered into force. In this short amount of time, remarkable progress has been made in the eradication of cluster munitions. The Convention’s wide membership and even wider support from the international community contribute to a growing stigma against cluster munitions. Stockpiles are being destroyed at an impressive rate, states are steadily clearing cluster munition remnants, and efforts are underway to address the needs and respect the rights of survivors.

Cluster munitions have a devastating impact on civilians, both at the time of use and long afterwards. They have a wide area footprint, with no way of distinguishing between civilian and military targets. Often a significant number of submunitions fail to explode when deployed, which mean unexploded submunitions remain on the ground, threatening lives long after a conflict has ended. They have killed and injured thousands of civilians over the past decades, and their presence over large areas of fertile land or urban settings poses a threat to the safety and livelihood of communities.

The CCM was adopted in 2008 as a comprehensive solution to this problem. It bans the use, production, stockpiling, and transfer of cluster munitions; requires destruction of stockpiled cluster munitions within eight years and clearance of contaminated land within ten years; protects the rights of victims of these weapons; and entitles affected states to international assistance to meet their legal obligations.

Current context

Today 117 countries have renounced cluster munitions through their signature, ratification, or accession to the CCM. Ninety-six of them are full states parties to the Convention. Some 160 million submunitions have already been destroyed by 27 states parties.

Since September 2014, the Cluster Munition Monitor has recorded new use of cluster munitions in the following states not party to the Convention: Libya, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, and Yemen. International reaction to use in recent years has been strong, including 157 states that have condemned use of cluster munitions in the context of ongoing use in Syria. The Dubrovnik Declaration adopted at the First Review Conference of the CCM reaffirms states parties’ deep concern over, and condemnation of, any use of cluster munitions by any actor.

The First Review Conference of the Convention (Dubrovnik, Croatia, 7-11 September 2015) agreed on an ambitious and realistic Action Plan to guide efforts towards ending the suffering caused by cluster munitions.
Recommendations for governments

During First Committee:

- All delegations should condemn the recent use of cluster munitions in Libya, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, and Yemen.
- States parties should emphasise that universalization of the CCM is essential to preventing any further harm, and report on their contribution to the implementation and universalization of the Convention.
- States outside the CCM should report on progress made towards joining and communicate their support for the humanitarian objectives of the Convention, as many of them do each year.

Beyond First Committee:

- All states must halt their use of cluster munitions, anywhere, under any circumstances.
- All states should join the CCM and implement the Dubrovnik Action Plan.
- States parties to the Convention must sustain their efforts to comply with all obligations, especially to clear their land and destroy their stocks within deadlines, and provide assistance to cluster munition victims on an equal basis to others with similar needs. They should report annually in accordance with Article 7.
- States parties should adopt legislative measures to implement the Convention, including a prohibition on investments in cluster munition producers.
- All states should provide the necessary resources to achieve the Convention’s goals efficiently.

1 While it is not always possible to establish which conflicting party is responsible for using the weapon, Cluster Munition Monitor reports evidence confirming use in all five states. The 2015 issue of Cluster Munition Monitor is available at www.the-monitor.org.