

**GENERAL STATEMENT OF BULGARIA AT THE FOURTH REVIEW
CONFERENCE OF THE HIGH CONTRACTING PARTIES TO THE
CONVENTION ON CERTAIN CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS**

14 NOVEMBER 2011, GENEVA

Mr. President,

At the outset let me extend to you the sincere congratulations of the Bulgarian delegation on assuming your post. Let me also reaffirm our commitment to spare no effort and to work under your able leadership for the successful outcome of the Fourth Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW).

Bulgaria will strive to strengthen the implementation and to enhance the relevance of the Convention as an important part of the International Humanitarian Law.

We expect and we will facilitate the conducting of a successful Review Conference. In our view time is ripe to make progress and to reach final conclusions on the ongoing important topics on the CCW agenda. Moreover the Conference should determine the perspectives and the future guidelines for strengthening its implementation and compliance mechanism.

Looking back, since the Third Review Conference in 2006 a lot of progress has been made with regard to considering ways to address the humanitarian concerns of cluster munitions while striking a balance between military and humanitarian considerations.

We support a successful conclusion of the negotiations on a Protocol on Cluster Munitions within the CCW during this Review Conference. We expect this new instrument to have a significant humanitarian effect in the near future. The provisions of such a Protocol are to be complementary to the Convention on Cluster Munitions regardless of the differences between the two instruments in terms of scope, membership and implementation.

~~Despite not being comprehensive, the Chair's text on a future Protocol attempts to induce the key players in this area to subscribe to certain legally binding multilateral commitments with regard to cluster munitions. This principle of inclusiveness would lead to additional humanitarian effects and these commitments of the key players would eventually change their attitude concerning cluster munitions altogether.~~

As a State Party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions Bulgaria understands and to a certain extent shares the concerns expressed by some NGOs and some High Contracting Parties to the CCW with regard to the proposed Protocol on Cluster Munitions. However, we are in favour of the non-zero sum game, speaking in general terms, and can not accept the "all or nothing" approach. We call on all delegations to show a high level of flexibility and reach a compromise solution.

Bulgaria is ready to support any proposal which has the potential to bring the existing differences in positions closer as well as any Draft Protocol which might draw the thin line of compromise between different groups of High Contracting Parties within the CCW.

The outcome of the current negotiations on a future protocol should not be prejudged as in our view there is a good chance for reaching a consensus which could be seen as a step in the right direction addressing the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions.

Mr. President,

In addition to the important negotiations on a new Protocol on cluster munitions we also have other very important issues to consider in the course of the next two weeks. The Review Conference and the CCW as a whole are much more than just cluster munitions negotiations. High Contracting Parties have the responsibility to strengthen the CCW regime in order to reinforce its role as one of the important instruments of the International Humanitarian Law.

Bulgaria considers the universalisation efforts as an important tool to further strengthen the CCW and its protocols. We are ready to support any proposal aimed at promoting the CCW values and the Convention itself. Bulgaria shares the views that High Contracting Parties should make better use of the CCW Sponsorship Program and is ready to explore new avenues and opportunities in this direction. We support the proposal to establish a standing agenda item on Universalisation at the Annual Meetings of the High-Contracting Parties in order to exchange information and reports on efforts to promote the CCW.

We must reiterate our call to states not parties to the CCW and its annexed protocols to adopt its principles as only its universalisation can make possible the fulfilment of the core objectives of the Convention.

The review of the work on compliance since the Third Review Conference clearly shows a "reporting fatigue". Bulgaria would appreciate an in-depth discussion over the next few days on the possible options for making the reporting requirements more pragmatic and reducing the reporting burden.

We are ready to support the proposal for synchronizing the deadline for submission of annual compliance reports with the deadlines for reports under Amended Protocol II and Protocol V. Another proposal which merits serious consideration is related to the possible submission of updates in the years when review conferences take place, provided that the relevant High Contracting Party does not have new information to present after its initial report. Along with lowering the reporting burden we could at the same time consider "soft sanctions" for High Contracting Parties which have not submitted their reports according to the compliance mechanism.

Thank you, Mr. President.