

OSLO CONFERENCE ON CLUSTER MUNITIONS
Oslo, 22-23 February 2007

“Towards a framework for cooperation and assistance”

Statement by
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Mr. Co-Chair,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to thank the Norwegian Government for organizing this Conference. The Government of Serbia fully supports the need to urgently address the pressing issue of cluster munitions that produce unacceptable humanitarian consequences. Serbia, together with Norway and a many other like-minded countries, joined the Declaration on cluster munitions submitted at the Third Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) held in Geneva, last November.

I would also like to express our full support of the initiatives contained in this morning's statement of H.E. Jonas Gahr Store, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway.

We are fully aware of the dangers and impact of cluster munitions on the civilian population during of 78 days of NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999. The consequences are still evident and are with us. Serbia fully supports the elaboration of a legally binding international instrument to address the concerns posed by cluster munitions. We will soon accede to Protocol V on the Explosive Remnants of War (ERW).

In Serbia we have achieved good results in the area of demining and mine destruction. The greatest danger, however, continues to be posed by unexploded cluster bombs. Cluster munition clearance calls for particular caution, specific approaches and specialized training of deminers, as well as adequate equipment. But without determining the precise location of the cluster bomb affected areas and substantial funding little can be done. The

suspected area that is still contaminated is estimated at approximately 23.000,000 sq. meters.

In order to speed up the process of clearance it is necessary to conduct a general survey of the locations targeted by cluster munitions. To that effect, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has requested NATO to provide GPS and other information. We are very grateful to the Government of Norway and the Norwegian People's Aid for providing funds and expertise for this survey, which will be carried out this year. Since the cost of the clearance operations are estimated at EUR 30 million, international assistance on a wider scale is needed.

Mr. Co-Chair,

I would like to draw your attention to a comprehensive case study entitled "Yellow Killers – the Impact of Cluster Munitions in Serbia and Montenegro", prepared by the Norwegian People's Aid which has been distributed to all participants at this conference. It is an excellent report and I would like to express my gratitude to NPA.

Some EUR 1.600,000 has been provided through the International Trust Fund (ITF), which is based in Slovenia, from international donations, while the amount of EUR 650.000 has been provided by the Government of Serbia for cluster munitions clearance. 2.500.000 sq. meters of unexploded cluster munitions contaminated area has been cleared, in accordance with the international standards.

Serbian Demining Centre has developed four projects according to which, in the course of this year, cluster munitions should be cleared from an additional area of 1.108,000 sq. meters.

Mr. Co-Chair,

We consider it very important to agree upon an Action Plan that should include both the activities aimed at the elaboration of an internationally binding instrument and measures for continued cooperation and assistance. I am confident that this Conference will underpin the implementation of this goal. We will spare no effort to bring about the earliest possible achievement of this crucial humanitarian goal. In that spirit, we fully support the draft declaration proposed by Norway.