

Cluster Munition Coalition
Statement on Stockpile Destruction
Convention on Cluster Munitions Seventh Meeting of States Parties
Geneva
4 September 2017

As delivered by Mary Wareham, Human Rights Watch

The stockpile destruction deadline for the first States Parties to ratify the Convention on Cluster Munitions is now less than one year away. It is therefore an appropriate time to check if States Parties with cluster munitions are on track to destroy them within the convention's eight-year deadline. This time next year we hope to be able to highlight an untarnished record of compliance with this core obligation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions that so visibly demonstrates progress toward a world without cluster munitions.

To date, there has been impressive progress as 29 States Parties have completed destruction of their stocks, collectively destroying 1.4 million cluster munitions containing more than 175 million submunitions. This represents the vast majority of the total reported global stocks of cluster munitions once held by States Parties.

In 2016 alone, three States Parties (Spain, Slovakia, and Switzerland) destroyed 56,171 cluster munitions and 2.8 million submunitions. We are pleased to have heard from all these states today on their progress and are glad they are on track to complete destruction of their stocks within the treaty's deadlines.

We welcome the progress made by Croatia since March 2017 and its pledge to complete the destruction of its cluster munitions by the end of this year. We were glad to hear that South Africa commenced the destruction of its cluster munitions in 2016. And to hear from new State Party Cuba that it is preparing to begin the destruction of its stockpiled cluster munitions in accordance with relevant environmental and safety measures and applicable standards and procedures.

Yet, it is not all good news and we therefore flag the following for your attention.

Momentum to destroy stocks by the deadline, or even much earlier, appears to be waning. While 20 States Parties have completed stockpile destruction since the convention entered into force in August 2010, no State Party did so in the second half of 2016 or first half of 2017.

Other States Parties with cluster munition stocks do not appear to have a plan in place to destroy them and have not started. We were hoping to hear today from Cameroon, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau. Guinea-Bissau that has indicated that it requires financial and technical assistance to destroy its stocks.

We were also hoping to hear from signatories with stockpiled cluster munitions, such as Cyprus, Indonesia, and Nigeria, as they appear to have taken few, if any, steps to ratify the convention or to declare and destroy their cluster munitions.

Many States Parties have transferred their cluster munition stocks to neighboring countries for destruction at specialist facilities, but until those cluster munitions are destroyed they are still under the responsibility of the country that originally possessed them. Therefore, it was with regret that the Monitor has added Slovenia back on to the global list of countries with cluster munition stocks to destroy. We are however glad to have heard from Slovenia as well as Bulgaria that work is underway to destroy their respective cluster munition stockpiles.

As always, our members stand ready to help States Parties to find ways to overcome financial, technical, and other challenges inhibiting the swift and safe destruction of their stockpiled cluster munitions.

Before concluding, we would like to highlight the fact that most States Parties have chosen not to retain any cluster munitions for training and research purposes. Many have told us they see no compelling reason to retain live cluster munitions and explosive submunitions for these purposes

Yet, 11 States Parties are retaining cluster munitions for training and research purposes, of which several (Italy, the Netherlands, Slovakia, and Sweden) have yet to consume any of their retained cluster munitions.

Some of these States Parties retaining cluster munitions for research and training have significantly reduced the number retained since making their initial declarations. That would indicate that the initial amounts retained were likely too high, but it is still not clear if current holdings constitute the “minimum number absolutely necessary” for the permitted purposes, as required by the convention.

Thank you.