

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleague Activists,

First of all, I would like to greet all of you and to express my great pleasure to be invited to speak at the opening of a conference of such high importance. I'm pleased to see so many state representatives gathered here to sign the Treaty. Your presence here today proves that our common fight and our great unity showed in the process of negotiations, has brought us to this common goal, signing the Treaty.

Since the beginning of the Oslo process a Coalition of non- governmental organisations from all over the world has been engaged in the fight against cluster munitions. Amongst them a number of cluster bomb survivors from different countries like Laos, Vietnam, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Ethiopia, Serbia and other countries, have been also active in the Oslo process and helped all the state participants to reach the right decision. Also the affected states have given great creative contribution to this process.

To my personal satisfaction, and to the satisfaction of all the survivors, our presence in this process, and sometimes our sheer appearance, a human being whose body parts were taken away by this dangerous weapon, has helped the indecisive and those who at the beginning were not fully aware of the horrifying impact of cluster munitions, to reach the right decision. We spared no effort in these conferences. Some of us spoke from the position of a survivor, someone who was injured in the cluster bomb explosion. Other spoke from their experience as family members of victims or from deminer's point of view, but all of us spoke from our personal experience about all the issues we thought this treaty should cover. Our experience stresses the danger of this horrifying weapon, and points out the suffering of the injured, their families, their societies, and the states affected. I owe enormous gratitude to all of you, who have made very difficult, but I 'm sure, right decision for humanity. The monstrous impact of this weapon was revealed and the humanity prevailed.

Some countries contaminated with cluster bombs in the past, are still suffering serious consequences. In the situation where there are a lot of people injured by these dangerous weapons, the affected state is placed in a very difficult position of not being able to provide adequate care for the cluster bomb survivors. The medical treatment of injuries and the post hospital rehabilitation are very expensive and very long. But that doesn't relieve all of the post traumatic effects. Furthermore, the state also has to provide continuous care and help for the survivors. In cases where there are many cluster bomb survivors, it is likely that the state won't have enough funding to provide for them all. We are also witnessing that the affected states are usually economically weakened, and unable to provide help to the survivors on their own, thus, most likely they are in need of financial aid from prosperous countries in order to solve this problem.

On top of the issues that I have already mentioned, there is another big issue, the clearance of contaminated areas which also hinders development and rebuilding of the affected state. The clearance process, as we all know, is expensive, lasts for years and increases the risk of new casualties.

With this Treaty we have shown our unity and determination. Therefore, many countries supporting the Treaty and coming to Oslo to sign it, is a glorious achievement. I hope that this unity will mark the future of international cooperation.

I would also like to take this opportunity to appeal to all the states that were active in the process but aren't here today, as well as to all the states who didn't participate in the Oslo process, to join in and to sign the Treaty. By signing the Treaty we save thousands of innocent civilians and protect the future of our children. But this is not the end of our road: we still have to make sure the Treaty is implemented, international supervising bodies are established and functional and the international funding included in the Treaty is available to those in need.

The beginning of the Oslo process has meant a lot to me. The fact of being able to fight against something that has brought a lot of suffering into my life and left me limbless and with other severe injuries, that brought immense post traumatic consequences, deprived me of normal life, made me dependent on others even for the simple tasks of hygiene or nourishment, deprived me of any possibility of finding a life-time partner or even making love, left me hopeless... Everything in my life seemed black. The beginning of the Oslo process gave me a new life, gave me strength to live on. Now my life has a new meaning and I have a future. Now I feel there is light.

I'm extremely glad to come here to Oslo for the second time, to witness the Treaty signing. It is a mere coincidence that today is my birthday and today I think that I'm the happiest person in the world. I got the best present I ever could ask for!

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleague Activists: thank you for such a beautiful present!