

Dear Excellencies and Colleagues,

Allow me at the outset on behalf of Iraq and Austria, as coordinators on the international cooperation and assistance of The Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), to thank you for your presence today.

The (CCM) is an International Treaty that addresses the humanitarian consequences and unacceptable harm to civilians caused by cluster munitions, through a categorical prohibition and a framework for action, the CCM is one of a comprehensive instrument of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), promotion of peace, security and development, by prohibits all use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions. In addition, it establishes a framework for cooperation and assistance to ensure adequate care and rehabilitation to survivors and their communities, clearance of contaminated areas, risk reduction education and destruction of stockpiles.

Cluster munitions are unacceptable weapons, because they have wide area effects and are unable to distinguish between civilians and combatants as well as the use of cluster munitions leave behind large numbers of dangerous unexploded ordnance. Such remnants kill and injure civilians, obstruct economic and social development, and have other severe consequences that persist for years and decades after use.

The CCM plays an important role by helping and supporting the persons directly impacted by cluster munitions as well as their affected families and communities, with out any discrimination between civilian and military forces. And it's the responsibility of the international community, international Organizations and civil societies to provide these victims with full support and find a sustainable solutions to improve the area where the victims live, especially the area with the economically importance for them and reintegrating them into Societies. Art. 5 detailing the procedures towards concrete implementation of victim assistance can be considered as major achievements, if it would be fully implemented.

We are really glad for the wide range of expertise in this room today. At the final stage of this workshop, we hope to have learnt from each other, from experts in the field, at the national level as well as states representatives and advocates that are engaged at the international level, and will have developed and deepened our common understanding that will lead into developing guidelines for States on the integrated approach to Victim Assistance.

I would like to thank our Australian and Chilean colleagues for the strong partnership and excellent cooperation that Austria and Iraq have been enjoying in preparation of this workshop.

Before we start, I would like to thank in particular Elke Hottentot from Handicap International who has done an incredible job in assisting the Co-Chairs to set this workshop up. Without her, we would not be here today. Let me also thank the ISU of the CCM for its support and all colleagues that have offered to contribute to this workshop for their active engaging and input to our work.

Now I would like to wish us all a very productive, interactive and interesting day. Thank you.