

STATEMENT BY THE RT HON DAVID MILIBAND, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS, ON SIGNING THE CONVENTION ON CLUSTER MUNITIONS, OSLO, 3 DECEMBER 2008

Your Excellency,

The United Kingdom is proud to be here today as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, a member of the European Union, and a supporter of peacekeeping operations around the world. Since the 30<sup>th</sup> of May we in the UK have been destroying our cluster munitions one by one.

With your permission I'd like to say three things.

First, what we are all doing here today is remarkable.

Remarkable because, in less than two years, under your guidance and strong leadership, over a hundred countries have come together to conceive, plan, negotiate, agree, and now sign the most significant disarmament treaty of recent years – the banning of cluster munitions.

A remarkable achievement; and carried out at a remarkable pace.

Second, what we are all doing here today is very simple and very good.

Good because it will make a difference to peoples' lives. We are committing ourselves to preventing further civilian deaths and injuries from cluster munitions, and to helping those whose lives have been blighted by them. Good because we are showing our commitment to international humanitarian law, and celebrating the tremendous positive energy which comes about through working together with civil society. Good because of the strong example we are setting and the clear political message that sends to others.

Third, what we're all doing here today is not the end – it's only the beginning.

Our global community must continually keep challenging itself about the way it behaves. Political leaders must show they are prepared to listen and respond to the voices of victims, of civil society, and of ordinary people. The Cluster Munition Convention, the "Oslo Convention", shows both the importance and the power of advocacy to make the world a safer, better place.

It's only the beginning because we must continue working together internationally, and so must our military forces, to prevent conflicts and deal with their legacy. And when military force is required, it must be used responsibly.

It's only the beginning because we need to encourage those countries not here today to accept that the world has changed, and that we have changed it. We are committed to working to secure the widest possible adherence to our new Convention. The voices of victims demand that until we achieve our goal we must pursue all avenues to prevent the use of these weapons by others.

We say Better World, Better Britain. I'm convinced that what we are doing today will help to make the world a safer, better place.

On behalf of the United Kingdom, it's therefore my privilege and honour to sign this Convention.

Thank you.