I am pleased to send greetings to all participants at this meeting. I thank Norway, which initiated the “Oslo process” that produced the Convention on Cluster Munitions, for hosting this important gathering.

A broad-based coalition of States, international organizations and members of civil society brought this Convention into being, and now they are now translating its provisions into action on the ground. This action is part of a growing recognition that the protection of civilians must be paramount.

Cluster munitions indiscriminately kill and maim civilians, both during and after conflicts. Their wide impact and high propensity to leave behind unexploded sub-munitions present a fundamental challenge to the requirement under international humanitarian law that civilians be protected against the effects of hostilities. Tragedies in many countries have demonstrated how cluster munition remnants present a formidable obstacle to post-conflict recovery, the return of refugees, and the rebuilding of livelihoods.

We must urgently address the harm caused when explosive weapons are used in communities where people live. I urge all States to end the use of these arms in densely populated areas, and I call for specific discussions on this issue to advance progress.

When this Convention enjoys universal support and strict compliance, it can effectively eradicate the use, development and transfer of cluster munitions.

Toward that end, I wish you great success in your deliberations on the progress and challenges in the implementation of the far-reaching Vientiane Action Plan and on ways to further strengthen the treaty’s implementation architecture.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions addresses the horrendous effects of these weapons and can put an end to the suffering they inflict. Let us take this opportunity to prevent their proliferation and future use. In this endeavour, you have my firm support and the commitment of the United Nations.