



Statement by His Excellency Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, Permanent Observer of the  
Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva  
at the Conference of the High Contracting Parties  
to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons  
*Geneva, 25-26 November 2010*

Mr President,

The Holy See Delegation would like to congratulate you on your election and it gives you its support to achieve, all together, in meeting the expectations of our people, men and women, who are victims of armed conflicts. It is our collective responsibility to create the conditions needed to protect them better. The CCW is one of the forums that should play a credible role in meeting these pressing expectations. The CCW it is not a world apart. It is a tool to support humanitarian objectives.

The protection of civilians in times of war and armed conflicts has accompanied mankind throughout its history, but, with varying degrees of acceptability of the suffering inflicted. However, what is new is the awareness that security is not just military. The so-called balance between military and humanitarian considerations is almost impossible to be defined and to be determined before seeing the results of a military action. After what number of dead, wounded and disabled can we talk about unacceptable military behavior? After how many destructions of infrastructures, livelihood sources and traumas, can we begin to say that the balance is broken? If any military action has the only purpose of national defense, then it must incorporate a paramount humanitarian dimension, which should take into account immediate and post-conflict consequences. The defense of national security interests can not and should not justify everything.

In this perspective, the work of the Group of Governmental Experts of the CCW, that has been working for several years on the question of cluster munitions, was not able to find an adequate response to the humanitarian problems caused by these weapons, precisely because of the confusion between military interests and humanitarian emergency. This Delegation considers that the Group's President's current text is far from meeting the urgency expressed by the mandate. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Gary Domingo for his commitment, his dynamism and his availability to move the negotiations forward in the right direction.

The cost of armed conflicts, beyond the human cost which is impossible to evaluate, are exorbitant. It is always more judicious, and wiser, to prevent than to repair. This Delegation has always advocated a precautionary approach. In this perspective, I

would to highlight the particular importance of having a restrictive approach on the transfers of cluster munitions. The proposal to negotiate an agreement on the transfers presents an evident humanitarian interest and it would be a pity not to proceed, in one way or another, in the direction of this proposal.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I would like to call all States Parties to the CCW to initiate a collective reflection to reform and better adapt this institution, after thirty years of its creation. It is time to draw the consequences, as all the countries in the world have done in many fields, of the deep changes of last decades, which have had an evident effect on many disarmament entities and on how they work. The 2011 Review Conference is the most appropriate opportunity to make the necessary decisions that will make the CCW even more credible and more effective in its ongoing efforts to better protect people of all countries that are in situations of armed conflicts.

Thank you, Mr President.