

CMC PRESS RELEASE

Over 100 countries adopt groundbreaking treaty to ban cluster bombs

Campaigners launch People's Treaty to hold governments to their word

Dublin, May 30th, 2008: Cluster bomb survivors and campaigners today welcomed the formal adoption of the Cluster Munitions Convention by over 100 countries. This historic treaty bans the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of all existing and future cluster bombs. To keep pressure on governments and to ensure that the treaty enters into force, campaigners today launched the People's Treaty.

"The adoption of this treaty has intensified the stigma attached to cluster bombs. It's up to the countries to turn the text into reality," said Thomas Nash, coordinator of the Cluster Munition Coalition.

After the formal adoption of the treaty text in Dublin today, the signing of the treaty will take place in Oslo in early December 2008. For the treaty to enter into force it must be ratified by 30 countries. Survivors and campaigners will be following up on a national level with the People's Treaty launched today.

"It is up to Governments now to show the political will to immediately start destroying stocks, clearing contaminated land and assisting survivors and their families", said Simon Conway, a former soldier and CMC Co-Chair

The treaty, which will see the majority of the world's stockpilers, producers and past users of cluster bombs enforce a categorical ban, has exceeded all expectations. Although initially stockpiler nations tried to protect their own stockpiles, no transition period and no exceptions are allowed.

This raises the bar for treaties covering conventional weapons, particularly around victim assistance. Humanitarian assistance for victims and affected communities, as well as obligations of affected countries and donors to clear contaminated land, go beyond what was agreed in the landmine treaty and build on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

"I lost my arms and legs because of cluster bombs. This treaty sets the highest standard to date for victim assistance and will make a real difference to affected people and communities around the world," said Branislav Kapetanovic a cluster munition survivor from Serbia.

At the start of the negotiations, key areas of concern included: victim assistance, joint military operations, transition period, stockpiling, clearance and definitions.

Campaigners are insisting that the treaty must be interpreted to prohibit foreign stockpiling and intentional assistance with use of the weapons.

"Moving forward, we will be watching very carefully to make sure that countries who have adopted the treaty can never again deliberately assist those who have not and that they reject any foreign stockpiling on their soil," said Steve Goose, CMC Co-Chair and Director of the Arms division at Human Rights Watch.

Proposals for transition periods allowing states to use the weapons for anything between seven and twelve years were quashed by affected states. Stockpiles of existing weapons must now be destroyed within eight years. After a lot of work on definitions of cluster munitions – which weapons are included or not in the ban – all types of existing cluster munitions are now banned, including M85s, BLU97s and MLRS weapons. Millions of explosive submunitions are now slated for destruction for those states that join the convention

"As of today, millions of weapons will be taken out of service and no more of these indiscriminate weapons will be used again. The world is a safer place thanks to the Oslo Process," said Grethe Ostern of Norwegian People's Aid and CMC Co-Chair.

This is the culmination of two weeks of intense negotiation under Irish leadership, and of thirteen months of treaty discussions since the launch of the Oslo process in February 2007, when 46 countries first committed to ban cluster bombs. To get to this point, Norway led the process; Ireland brokered the deal; Peru, Austria, New Zealand held key international conferences; Mexico, Costa Rica, Zambia, Serbia, Belgium led regional conferences and Laos and Lebanon gave compelling evidence for affected countries.

As of the formal adoption today over 100 states including many NATO allies, UK, Canada, Germany, France, Netherlands, Denmark, Italy, Spain, Belgium are committed to no longer using cluster bombs.

For more information and interviews and to get copies of the video news release and photo materials, please contact in Dublin: Natalie Curtis: +44 (0) 7515 575174, natalie@stopclustermunitions.org ; Daniel Barty: +353 8666 95967, dbarty@austcare.org.au

NOTES TO EDITORS:

What is the Dublin Diplomatic Conference on Cluster Munitions?

Over 100 countries negotiated the cluster munition treaty in Dublin, Ireland from 19-30 May 2008. At the negotiations, they agreed to the final language of the treaty. The negotiations were based on a draft treaty that set out a comprehensive ban. The cluster munition treaty represents the most significant advance in the field of humanitarian and disarmament affairs since the achievement of the 1997 treaty prohibiting antipersonnel mines.

Information at: <http://www.stopclusterbombs.ie/> and <http://www.clustermunitionsdublin.ie/>

What are cluster bombs?

Cluster munitions are large weapons which are deployed from the air and from the ground and release dozens or hundreds of smaller submunitions. Submunitions released by air-dropped cluster bombs are most often called "bomblets," while those delivered from the ground by artillery or rockets are usually referred to as "grenades."

What's the problem with this weapon?

Air-dropped or ground-launched, they cause two major humanitarian problems and risks to civilians. First, their widespread dispersal means they cannot distinguish between military targets and civilians so the humanitarian impact can be extreme, especially when the weapon is used in or near populated areas.

Many submunitions fail to detonate on impact and become de facto antipersonnel mines killing and maiming people long after the conflict has ended. These duds are more lethal than antipersonnel mines; incidents involving submunition duds are much more likely to cause death than injury.

Who has used cluster munitions?

At least 14 countries have used cluster munitions: Eritrea, Ethiopia, France, Israel, Morocco, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Russia (USSR), Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tajikistan, UK, US, and FR Yugoslavia. A small number of non-state armed groups have used the weapon (such as Hezbollah in Lebanon in 2006). Billions of submunitions are stockpiled by some 76 countries. A total of 34 states are known to have produced over 210 different types cluster munitions. More than two dozen countries have been affected by the use of cluster munitions including Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Chad, Croatia, DR Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Grenada, Iraq, Israel, Kuwait, Laos, Lebanon, Montenegro, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Uganda, and Vietnam, as well as Chechnya, Falkland/Malvinas, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Western Sahara.

Why is a ban on cluster munitions necessary?

Simply put, cluster munitions kill and injure too many civilians. The weapon caused more civilian casualties in Iraq in 2003 and Kosovo in 1999 than any other weapon system.

Cluster munitions stand out as the weapon that poses the gravest dangers to civilians since antipersonnel mines, which were banned in 1997. Yet there is currently no provision in international law to specifically address problems caused by cluster munitions. Israel's massive use of the weapon in Lebanon in August 2006 resulted in more than 200 civilian casualties in the year following the ceasefire and served as the catalyst that has propelled governments to attempt to secure a legally-binding international instrument tackling cluster munitions in 2008.

For more information see the CMC position papers at: <http://www.stopclusterbombs.ie/>

What is the Oslo Process?

In February 2007, 46 governments met in Oslo to endorse a call by Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre to conclude a new legally binding instrument in 2008 that prohibits the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians and provides adequate resources to assist survivors and clear contaminated areas.

Subsequent International Oslo Process meetings were held in Peru (May 2007), Austria (December 2007), and New Zealand (February 2008). Over 100 countries have committed to

participate in the final negotiations in Ireland in May. See <http://clusterprocess.org/> for more information.

What is the Cluster Munition Coalition?

The Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) is a global network of over 250 civil society organisations working in 70 countries to end the harm caused by cluster bombs. Founding members include Human Rights Watch, Handicap International and other leaders from the Nobel Peace Prize-winning International Campaign to Ban Landmines which secured the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty. Launched in November 2003, the CMC is campaigning for the diplomatic Oslo Process to result in a strong international treaty prohibiting cluster munitions.

For more information go to: <http://www.stopclustermunitions.org/>

Who is the Cluster Munition Coalition Ireland?

The Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) Ireland is a coalition of Irish non-governmental organisations working to achieve a new international treaty to ban cluster munitions. The treaty will ban the use, sale and stockpiling of cluster munitions, and establish a framework to assist cluster munition survivors and their communities, as well as to clear contaminated land. Coalition members include Amnesty International Irish Section, Oxfam Ireland, Trócaire, Concern Worldwide, Pax Christi Ireland and UNICEF Ireland.

CMC Ireland works to:

- increase awareness among the Irish public of the terrible harm caused by cluster munitions and what is being done about it,
- publicise the Dublin Diplomatic Conference on Cluster Munitions that is being held in May 2008, where more than a hundred states will negotiate and adopt the treaty,
- ensure the Dublin Diplomatic Conference on Cluster Munitions results in a meaningful and robust treaty that protects vulnerable civilians in times of conflict
- ensure that the Irish government stands firm as chair of the conference to deliver this result.

For further information check out: <http://www.stopclusterbombs.ie>