



MEDIA STATEMENT - For Immediate Release

AFRICA CONTINUES TO LEAD THE WAY ON CLUSTER BOMB BAN

Campaigners call for African unity on eve of cluster bomb conference

(Kampala, Uganda: 29 September 2008) – Forty African governments gathered in Uganda today at a meeting to promote signature of a groundbreaking treaty banning cluster bombs. The Cluster Munition Coalition, an international network of campaigners and cluster bomb survivors, called on all African governments to unite in signing the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Oslo on 3 December 2008.

“Africa has been crucial to ensuring the creation of a strong treaty banning cluster munitions. Now African states should unite to ensure every government follows through and signs the Convention,” said Dr. Robert Mtonga of IPPNW Zambia, Africa spokesperson for the international Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC).

In May 2008 more than 100 states agreed to ban cluster bombs because they kill and injure too many civilians both during and after attacks. The Convention on Cluster Munitions will be opened for signature in Oslo, Norway on 3 December 2008.

“We urge Algeria, Angola, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Rwanda and all states that have not yet endorsed the cluster bomb ban to sign the Convention this December,” said Ms. Margaret Arach Orech, director of the Uganda Landmine Survivors Association, a CMC member. “We don’t want there to be any more victims from cluster munitions. For too long Africa has felt the devastating effects of indiscriminate weapons like landmines and cluster bombs. Signing the Convention on Cluster Munitions will help prevent civilian casualties and build peace” she added.

A total of 34 African states adopted the Convention on Cluster Munitions in May 2008. It remains to be seen whether the nineteen others will sign the Convention this December and campaigners will be pushing for positive signals from Angola, Central African Republic, Djibouti, Eritrea, The Gambia, Guinea Conakry, Liberia, Mauritius and Zimbabwe who did not adopt the treaty in Dublin in May but who have all registered to attend the Kampala conference.

“This region has experienced first-hand the humanitarian consequences of this deadly weapon,” said Ethiopian cluster bomb survivor Mr. Berihu Mesele. “This Convention is not only about banning cluster munitions; it contains important humanitarian provisions to clear contaminated land and assist survivors, their families and communities.” Mesele lost both his legs in June 1998, when a school near his home in Mekele was hit by a cluster bomb strike.

In Africa, cluster munitions have been used in Angola, Chad, DR Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Morocco (in the disputed Western Sahara), Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Uganda. Globally at least 77 countries have stockpiled cluster munitions, including Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan, and Uganda.

See also:

- CMC Fact Sheet, “Cluster Munitions in Africa” (September 2008)
<http://www.stopclustermunitions.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2008/09/cm-in-africa-sept-2008.pdf>
- CMC Webpage on the Kampala Conference:
<http://www.stopclustermunitions.org/calendar/?id=628>

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Notes to Editors

What is the Kampala Conference on the Convention on Cluster Munitions

On 29-30 September 2008, more than 40 governments are expected to attend this regional meeting hosted by the government of Uganda to discuss the new international treaty banning cluster bombs and requiring their clearance and assistance to survivors. These include: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Eritrea, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Conakry, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

What are cluster bombs?

Cluster bombs or munitions are large weapons which are deployed from the air and from the ground and release up to hundreds of smaller submunitions. Submunitions released by airdropped cluster bombs are 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, Georgia, 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, Georgia, 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 propelled governments to ban the weapon in 2008.

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 provide adequate resources to assist survivors and clear contaminated areas. Subsequent International Oslo Process meetings were held in Peru (May 2007), Austria (Dec. 2007), and New Zealand (Feb. 2008). 107 countries negotiated and adopted a treaty that bans cluster bombs and provides assistance to affected communities in May 2008 in Dublin. The Convention on Cluster Munitions will be opened for signature in Oslo, Norway on 3 December 2008, the international day for persons with disabilities.

States that adopted the Convention on Cluster Munitions (107)

Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chad, Chile, Comoros, Republic of Congo, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Holy See, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Lesotho, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia (FYR), Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Togo, Uganda, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela and Zambia.