



Call to governments

Sofia Conference on Cluster Munitions, 18 – 19 September 2008

The Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) welcomes the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) that was adopted by 107 states at the Dublin Diplomatic Conference on 30 May this year. The Convention prohibits the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions and sets groundbreaking humanitarian obligations for victim assistance, clearance of contaminated land and destruction of stockpiles. Because of its wide-ranging practical implications this new piece of international law will have a profound and positive effect on the lives of countless individuals and communities and prevent further lives from being shattered in the future. This is the most significant humanitarian and disarmament treaty this decade.

The CMC is very pleased that the majority of South East European states adopted the Convention in Dublin and by taking this bold and visionary step, are enhancing the protection of civilians in armed conflict. We expect all states to be in Oslo on December 3rd of this year to sign the CCM and we invite states to make announcements at this conference of your intention to do so. We also urge those states here that did not adopt the Convention in Dublin to sign the Convention in Oslo in recognition of the urgency and importance of addressing the humanitarian problems caused by cluster munitions. There are also interim steps that states can announce such as a moratorium on the use, transfer and production of cluster munitions.

The use of cluster munitions in Georgia last month was an unwelcome reminder of the need for a comprehensive ban on these weapons, and not just weak regulations that are easily ignored. Because of the weapon's wide area effects civilians were killed and injured during attacks and because of the large amount of unexploded ordnance left behind civilians were killed and injured after the attacks and are still living with the threat today. In Lebanon, two years after the ceasefire, civilians are still at risk from submunitions, even after a massive multi-million dollar clean-up effort.

The priorities for the Cluster Munition Coalition are widespread signature of the Convention in Oslo on 3 December, swift ratification and rapid entry into force, full and effective implementation, and universalization of the treaty. We will be working to ensure that these weapons are thoroughly stigmatised in the public eye and in the international community so that, like antipersonnel landmines, their use will become almost non-existent. The CMC invites delegates to read the Cluster Munition Coalition's Briefing Paper on the Convention.

Our key messages for states at the Sofia Conference are as follows:

- States should sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions at the Oslo Signing Conference on 3 December in Oslo, Norway.
- States should take national steps to begin to implement the Convention, even before it is signed, including:
 - Developing national legislation to ratify the Convention swiftly enabling quick entry into force
 - Starting the process of stockpile destruction and making clear what types and quantities of cluster munitions your country has in its stockpiles, if any.
 - Establishing a national action plan to implement victim assistance involving survivors of cluster munitions in this process, and assign a focal person to coordinate this work.
 - Announcing progress made on clearance efforts and work and the remaining time it will take to complete clearance.
- States should not endorse, adopt or subsequently ratify a lower standard on cluster munitions in the CCW.

The CMC welcomes announcements confirming that states will sign the Convention at the Oslo Conference on 3 December and of national steps being taken to ratify and implement the Convention.