



FACT SHEET ON CLUSTER MUNITIONS

- Cluster munitions are large weapons containing dozens to hundreds of smaller submunitions, often called **bomblets**, within a larger container. They are dropped from the air or fired from the ground, at which point the container opens in the air and scatters the bomblets over a wide area – sometimes the size of 2-4 football fields.
- As so many of the submunitions fail to work properly, huge quantities are left on the ground and, **like landmines, remain a fatal threat to anyone in the area long after a conflict ends**. Over two dozen countries are affected by this weapon. Tens of thousands of civilians worldwide have been killed or injured by cluster bombs.
- Cluster bombs were first used in World War II by German and Soviet forces. During the 1970s, the USA used massive quantities of the weapon in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. More recently, cluster bombs were used extensively in the Gulf Wars, Chechnya, the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq and in Lebanon in 2006. Cluster munitions have also been used in a number of conflicts in Africa.
- This massive humanitarian problem has been a matter of concern to aid workers, researchers and affected governments for decades. However, it was not until after **clusters were used heavily in Lebanon during the summer of 2006** – resulting in more than 200 civilian casualties in the year following the ceasefire – that governments were compelled to attempt to secure a legally-binding international instrument tackling cluster munitions.
- In February 2007 the Oslo Declaration gained the support of forty-six countries committing to pass a legally binding treaty by 2008 that will **prohibit the use, transfer, and production of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians**.
- A treaty was negotiated during the Dublin Diplomatic Conference on Cluster Munitions in May 2008 - the final stage in the “Oslo Process”. All of the participating governments, totaling 107, adopted the final treaty text. It will open for signature at a ceremony in Oslo in December 2008.
- The central provision of the Cluster Munitions Convention is the ban on the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions. This makes it illegal for every country that is party to the Convention to use cluster munitions or engage in any production or trade of the weapon. The Convention also stipulates clear deadlines for destroying existing stockpiles and clearance of contaminated areas.
- The Cluster Muniton Coalition (CMC) is an **international coalition working to protect civilians from the effects of cluster munitions**. The CMC has a membership of around 300 civil society organisations from more than 80 countries.