

**Statement by Lynn Bradach to the 7th session of the Group of Governmental Experts of the CCW
Session on Victim Assistance, Monday 3 November 2008**

My name is Lynn Bradach and it is an honor to be before you today. The journey that has brought me here has been a strange one and it has been one that I have been forced to take. It was just eight years ago that I was a working mother in the US. I had no concept of war, of its weapons and what the true impact of war could have on a family. Many of us in the US are that way.

In 2000 my oldest son Travis joined the US Marines. Once again I did not understand why but it was his choice. The world in my view was safe and beautiful and I agreed that he was in need of some discipline in his life. In 2001 the world began to explode on me. For the first time I felt the worries of war but they were still very distant. After awhile the truth emerged about the attack on the towers and I believed with all my heart that the US would not go to war.

The year 2003 brought about the destruction to my perfect world and my first steps on this journey. My son Cpl John Bradach-Nall was sent to war. I now had full knowledge of what a parent feels for their child in a situation that you can not control, you can not fully understand and you do not know how to keep your child safe. My son was a trained Marine not an innocent little child caught in the cross fire and still like any mother I was heart sick with fear.

The war was declared over and I believe that Travis would be coming home. I didn't even give a second thought to what had been left behind. Now looking back how very thoughtless and selfish of me. That safe return was not to be. My brave son called to say that he had volunteered to stay on with a group of his buddies to clear bombs and other unexploded ordinances. He said "Momma you are safe. Nothing can happen to you. I need to be here to take care of my buddies. I need to make sure they all come home." On July 2, 2003 I was informed that Travis was killed by an explosive device and with his death that Lynn Bradach of the perfect innocent world also died.

I later learned that this device that took my son's life was a US cluster submunition, that probably would not be banned by the chair's text. Thousand of these barbaric, inhumane little bomblets had been fired off at the beginning of the invasion and now, because of the large dud rate laid scattered about waiting for unsuspecting victims. I have learned so much about this weapon. The fact is that this weapon is an antiquated weapon of war. It was wrong to use it from the very beginning. The purpose of the weapon was to drop bombs or fire off large numbers of shells at advancing troops and artillery to stop or hinder their progress. This type of war ceased to be waged long ago.

Travis' buddies have told me that they were trained that when they encountered a Cluster bomb they were not to touch it. It was to be destroyed in place. The weapon was considered to be so sensitive and so deadly that even well trained marines were not to deal with it. However I was informed that protocol was not followed, that someone had gotten lax and had started to move them to destroy them in mounds. This carelessness cost the young man who moved the weapon his eye, hand and leg but it also cost him the life of a fellow Marine, my son. This cost is surely the heaviest burden he has to live with.

If even the best trained military personnel can accidentally fall victim to this weapon how on earth do we think we can expect civilians to return to a land littered with them and not fall prey to them.

The dream of every parent is that the world they leave to their child is a better one than the one they themselves came into. We pray that each generation learns from the mistakes of the last. In my case it is my son who has left me because of the mistakes of an earlier generation. He has left me to try to make it a better world. It is now up to me to ask my country the United States of America to stand up and be the nation he believed he was fighting for. To do all they can to safeguard innocent lives by banning the manufacture, the stockpiling and the use of Cluster munitions. If my country as strong and good as I believe it is, is not yet ready to take the lead than

I pray that those of you before me will set a strong example by signing the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Oslo on December 3 of this year and encourage us to follow you.

It is time to stop being afraid to stand up and do what is right. How can we live with ourselves if we don't take action when we know something is so very wrong. We can not give a child back their arms, their legs or their lives. We can not give a parent back their child but we can prevent any more of this tragedy from happening and care for those who have been impacted.

I thank you for your time and your commitment to making this a better world by signing the Convention on Cluster Munitions Dec 3 in Oslo.