



PRESS RELEASE

Campaigners welcome signing of historic international treaty banning deadly cluster munitions

New treaty also obligates governments to provide victim assistance and to clear contaminated land

Oslo, Dec 3rd, 2008 - Today in Oslo, governments from around the world are signing the most significant disarmament and humanitarian treaty of the decade, banning the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions, and obligating them to provide victim assistance and to clear contaminated land. Signatories of the Convention on Cluster Munitions include many of the world's producers, stockpilers and past users, as well as some of the most seriously affected states. Close to fifty foreign, defense and government ministers from around the world are signing the treaty, demonstrating the high level of political commitment to urgently rid the world of cluster munitions.

"This treaty shows what can be achieved when states and civil society act together," said Co-Chair of the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) Grethe Østern of Norwegian People's Aid. *"This is a victory because the treaty outlines clear obligations for states to help survivors, clear the land and destroy stockpiles so that the weapon can never be used again."*

Like chemical, biological, and antipersonnel landmine conventions before, this treaty bans an entire category of weapons. For over 40 years cluster bombs have killed and injured civilians during and after conflict. Unexploded cluster munitions continue to kill and injure for days, months, even decades after conflict. Tens of thousands of civilians worldwide have been killed or injured by the weapon. On average, a quarter of all cluster bomb victims are children. The treaty will help ensure that survivors, including their families and communities, receive concrete and measurable victim assistance, including physical and psycho-social needs, equality, rights and national action plans.

CMC Spokesperson Branislav Kapetanovic said, *"The development of this treaty has meant a lot to me and has given me a reason to live. Being able to fight against something that brought a lot of suffering into my life and left me without arms and legs, left me without hope"*. Kapetanovic was injured in November 2000 while clearing NATO cluster submunitions in Serbia. *"For us here, this is not the end of our road: we still have to make sure the Treaty is implemented and monitored, and that funding is available to those in need,"* he added.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions sets the highest standard to date in international law for assistance to victims and their communities. It obliges nations to destroy all stockpiles within eight years and to clear contaminated land within ten. States must also provide detailed annual transparency reports on progress towards meeting their legal obligations.

"Countries have finally realized that today's wars cannot be fought or won with cold war weapons – the sooner they are destroyed, the better," said Thomas Nash, CMC Coordinator. *"As of today, millions of these indiscriminate weapons will be destroyed and the world will be a safer place,"* he added. A number of countries have already started destroying their stockpiles.

The majority of NATO countries are signing the treaty, including the UK, France and Germany, as well as most African and Latin American countries, and some of the most contaminated nations, including Laos and Lebanon. After Oslo, the treaty will remain open for signature at the UN in New York. For the treaty to enter into force it must be ratified by 30 countries.

“Like the landmine ban treaty, this treaty will stigmatize the use of the weapon by all countries, even if they have not yet signed the treaty, Nations such as the United States, Russia, and Israel will risk severe international condemnation if they ever use cluster munitions again,” said CMC Co-Chair Steve Goose, Director of the Arms division at Human Rights Watch. *“This is a time to celebrate, but the work doesn’t stop here. It is time for countries to turn these binding words on paper into a reality on the ground,”* he concluded.

For further information, including interviews with cluster bomb survivors, former military, Nobel Peace Laureates and campaigners in every language from over 70 countries please contact:

Natalie Curtis: +44 (0)7515 575 174 Natalie@stopclustermunitions.org

Samantha Bolton: +47 92 21 53 85 or +41 79 239 2366 clustermunitioncoalition@gmail.com

Sabrina Montanvert (French) +47 46 50 03 13 or +33 66 424 3607 S.Montanvert@yahoo.fr

MEDIA FACILITIES:

- Live position for broadcasters with satellite facility available for rent. Contact: ms@eastproduction.dk, +45 5536 5757/ +45 2927 1729 Position for cameras, photographers and audio output at the back of the main hall (where the opening ceremony and main speeches will be held).
- Dedicated photos and interview areas in Oslo City Hall.
- A live-feed (streaming) to alternate between the main hall and the signing room Audio and live footage tapping from an outside broadcasting unit (OB van) outside the Oslo City Hall. CMC Video News Release is on EBU.
- FTP packages for each nation’s media: Raw material in IMX and DV PAL format including footage of each country’s representative making their speech and signing the Convention, stock shots and background material. A link to this site, along with username and password will be generated automatically from www.osloccm.no/media. This site will be operative from 24 November.

***The Cluster Munition 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, and includes organisations working on disarmament, peace and security, human rights, victim/survivor assistance, clearance, women’s rights, faith issues and other areas of work. The CMC facilitates the efforts of NGOs worldwide to educate governments, the public and the media about the problems of cluster munitions and the solution*

Cluster bombs

Millions of cluster munitions containing billions of submunitions are stockpiled by at least 77 states and 34 countries are known to have produced them. They have been used in more than 32 countries and areas around the world. Millions of explosive submunitions are now slated for destruction by states that signed the Convention. Some countries have already begun destroying stockpiles.

What are cluster bombs?

Cluster 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 most often called “bomblets,” while those delivered from the ground by artillery or rockets are usually referred to as “grenades.”

Globally, 34 countries are known to have produced over 210 different types of air-dropped and surface-launched cluster munitions including projectiles, bombs, rockets, missiles, and dispensers. Existing stockpiled cluster munitions contain billions of individual submunitions. Cluster munitions have been stockpiled by at least 77 states

and have been used in at least 30 countries and disputed territories. According to available information, at least 13 countries have transferred over 50 types of cluster munitions to at least 60 other countries.

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 15 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 has propelled governments to attempt to secure a legally-binding international instrument tackling cluster munitions 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 (December 2007), and New Zealand (February 2008). 107 countries negotiated and adopted a treaty that bans cluster bombs and provides assistance to affected communities in May 2008 in Dublin.

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.