



## Press Release

### **MILLIONS OF CLUSTER BOMBS READY FOR DESTRUCTION**

More than 80 Governments meet in Berlin to plan weapon disposal

(Berlin 24<sup>th</sup> June 2009) – The new international convention banning cluster bombs is already delivering results as signatories plan the destruction of these indiscriminate weapons even before it has entered into force said the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) today on the eve of a major international conference in Berlin. On 25 and 26 June delegations from more than 80 countries will meet in the German capital to discuss plans for stockpile destruction.

Since the Convention on Cluster Munitions opened for signature in December 2008 in Oslo, 98 countries have already signed and 10 have ratified it. The treaty will enter into force 6 months after the 30th ratification is deposited at the United Nations in New York. Early initiatives on the implementation of the treaty are very encouraging.

“As representatives from civil society, we are thrilled to witness the continued momentum behind the ban and the desire from many countries to relegate cluster bombs to history,” said Thomas Nash, Co-ordinator of the CMC. “This meeting in Berlin and the attendance of so many countries show that the treaty is more than words on paper. Signatories are determined to implement it.”

The Convention obliges signatory states to destroy their stockpiles of the weapon as soon as possible but no later than 8 years after entry into force. 31 out of 32 signatories that still possess stockpiles of the weapon are expected to be in Berlin this week showing their willingness to start destruction soon and abide by the treaty deadline. More than a dozen countries have already started – and Spain has even finished – destroying their stockpiles.

“The destruction of these weapons is an illustration of the incredible evolution for many states,” said Steve Goose, director of the arms division at Human Rights Watch which co-chairs the CMC. “These weapons were once considered crucial in military arsenals and are now being reduced to inoffensive scrap metal. Every cluster bomb that is destroyed is a cluster bomb that will not kill or maim innocent civilians in the future.”

Hundreds of millions of cluster bombs are still owned by countries outside the treaty and civil society across the globe will keep working tirelessly to make sure these countries sign and that their stockpiles end up in destruction plants and not hurting civilians.

“Cluster bombs have caused an appalling number of casualties,” said Lynn Bradach who’s son, a US Marine, died in Afghanistan while clearing unexploded cluster bombs. “I hope the United States, the biggest stockpiler in the world, will soon realise that and accept that these horrible weapons belong in destruction facilities, not in military arsenals”. Ms Bradach is member of the 'Ban Advocates', a group of people who have been affected by cluster bombs which calls on all governments to join the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Such a mobilisation even before the treaty has entered into force should be an example for all signatories to start implementation of all treaty obligations as soon as possible. Victim assistance, land clearance, increased funding for affected countries and obviously stopping the use, production and transfer should also become a reality as soon as possible.

“We welcome the initiative of the German Government to organise such an important meeting so soon after the treaty opened for signature” said Thomas Küchenmeister, who heads the German branch of the CMC. “Gathering so many countries around the issue of



stockpile destruction shows the continued commitment of the German authorities regarding the implementation of the convention. We can only urge them to keep that alive and to spread the word so that more countries sign and ratify”.

Early steps are welcome, but it is crucial that the treaty enters into force as swiftly as possible. In practice, this will mean that the clock will start ticking on the deadlines included in the treaty – 8 years for destruction and 10 years for land clearance. 20 more ratifications need to happen as soon as possible to give to the treaty its full power.

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## **NOTES:**

### **Cluster bombs:**

A cluster bomb, or cluster munition, is a weapon containing multiple – often hundreds – of small explosive submunitions, or bomblets. They are dropped from the air or fired from the ground and designed to break open in mid-air, releasing the submunitions over an area that can be the size of several football fields. This means they cannot discriminate between civilians and soldiers. Also, as many fail to explode on impact, they remain a threat for communities decades after they were dropped.

### **The Cluster Munition Coalition**

The CMC is an international coalition of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in 80 countries to encourage urgent action against cluster bombs. 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 through the global treaty banning the weapon.

### **Berlin Conference**

In order to support the timely implementation of the Convention’s obligations, the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO), together with the Royal Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, have organised a conference dealing with the particular challenge of the destruction of stockpiled cluster munitions, and to look at the issue of retention of cluster munitions for training purposes, of international cooperation and assistance as well as of reporting. This event will allow experts to share knowledge and experience, and thus to provide signatories to the Convention on Cluster Munitions with guidance and broader information on the issue of cluster munitions’ destruction.