



UN Special Event on the Convention on Cluster Munitions

New York, 21 October 2009

The United Nations held a Special Event on the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions today at its headquarters in New York. The event was co-hosted by the UN Development Programme and the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs in cooperation with the Cluster Munition Coalition. CMC campaigners worked closely with UNDP and ODA to encourage States to participate in the event.

Representatives from a total of 60 countries participated in the event. Nineteen were from countries that have not yet signed the Convention: Bhutan, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, Greece, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Malaysia, Qatar, Singapore, Suriname, Tajikistan, USA and Vanuatu. Other participating governments included: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Comoros, Cyprus, Ecuador, France, Germany, Guatemala, Holy See, Ireland, Indonesia, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Lao PDR, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malawi, Malta, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Norway, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, Tanzania, Uruguay and Zambia. Representatives from CARICOM and the European Union also came.



From left to right: Mr. Andy Rachmianto (Indonesia), Mr. Thoralf Stenvold (Norway), Ms. Sara Sekkenes (UNDP), Ambassador Kanika Phommachanh (Lao PDR), Ms. Maria Vardis (UNDP), Mr. Thomas Nash (Cluster Munition Coalition), Mr. Jordan Ryan (UNDP). Delegates participating in the UN Special Event on the Convention on Cluster Munitions. All photos © Mary Wareham.

UN High Representative for Disarmament Sergio Duarte addressed the meeting, urging all UN member states to sign and ratify the Convention without delay and noting that its entry into force in 2010 would make that year a “truly historic one in disarmament.” Ambassador Duarte described the Convention as “a major step forward in global efforts to protect civilians and to control the abhorrent spread of deadly weaponry that is viewed around the world as inhumane.” Duarte emphasized two “universal reasons” for every country to join the Convention namely “the prevention of future tragedy, and the forceful drive in humanitarian norm-setting which emanates from global participation in the convention.

Mr. Jordan Ryan, UNDP Assistant Administrator and head of its Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery that has spearheaded the UN effort throughout the Oslo Process, also addressed the meeting focusing on the humanitarian and development effects of cluster munitions and the need for

implementation of its provisions. Ryan described the Convention's holistic nature as being about "safeguarding the lives and livelihoods of children, families and communities across the world. It is about the youngsters tending cattle, collecting scrap metal or helping out in rice paddies in their villages. It is about their parents' right to safely earn a livelihood for their family and walk without fear to sites of religious practice and cultural heritage. It is not their responsibility to be more careful; it is our collective responsibility to clear those fields. That is what this Convention will help to do." Ryan noted that the treaty would also "stigmatize potential unilateral attempts for future use" and "begin to put an end to the horror of cluster munitions."

The Lao Ambassador to the United Nations, H.E. Ms. Kanika Phommachanh, said that as the world's worst affected country from cluster munitions, her government urges all States to join the Convention without delay. The Ambassador noted that "for 45 years, Laos has been faced with the effects of explosive weapons, in particular cluster munitions" and urged "all countries in a position to do so to contribute to a substantial increase in resources allocated to Lao PDR" noting that its "implementation of the Convention will surely depend on this." Regarding the First Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, the Ambassador Phommachanh welcomed the "widespread support expressed by delegations at the First Committee this month for [the Lao] offer to host this historic meeting" in late 2010 and detailed the substantial plans that her government has already undertaken to prepare for this in cooperation with supportive governments, the CMC and UNDP.

Thomas Nash, Coordinator of the Cluster Munition Coalition, welcomed the active role of the UN and the leadership of Lao PDR and congratulated all states who have already ratified the Convention. Nash outlined three factors for success in the Oslo Process that must continue in order to realise the Convention's full potential: "the leadership of affected States" and "the involvement of survivors and their communities"; "the genuine partnership ... between States, civil society, and international organisations"; and the focus on the "effects of cluster munitions on people and communities that has framed our work and driven it forward beyond other considerations." Nash outlined the road ahead to the First Meeting of States Parties, including a regional conference in Bali in November, the 30th ratification to trigger entry into force, further regional conferences to promote adherence to the Convention, a global meeting to prepare for the First Meeting of States Parties, a global celebration on the day of entry into force in the middle of next year and the Convention's First Meeting of States Parties in Lao PDR at the end of that year.

Veronique Christory of ICRC's delegation to the UN in New York noted the importance of joining the Convention on Cluster Munitions as part of broader efforts to take action on "explosive weapons that keep on killing." Ms. Christory outlined ICRC's ongoing efforts to promote adherence to the Convention through its advisory service and regional offices and introduced the materials the ICRC has put at the disposal of States, including ratification kits and model legislation, copies of the Convention in all UN languages, and a film and brochure explaining the Convention and the problem of cluster munitions.



As Malawi and Macedonia ratified the Convention most recently on 7 and 8 October respectively, they were invited to take the floor first. Both countries presented their ratification instruments at the event to applause.

Malawi announced that it is proud to be among the first 30 countries to ratify the Convention and encouraged others to also sign and ratify. Malawi said that by joining the Convention it helps to ensure that benefits

are provided to affected communities. Malawi expressed that it looks forward to working with Lao PDR in advance of the 1MSP and expressed the importance of full implementation of the Convention.

Macedonia announced that it is the most recent country to ratify the Convention after the domestic ratification process was completed on 16 September. Macedonia said that it attached great importance to the CCM and was involved in the negotiation of the Convention in Dublin. Macedonia noted that it looks forward to the 1MSP, congratulated Lao PDR on its efforts and said it would participate in the 1MSP.



Ireland said that the Oslo Process is an outstanding example of the partnership of concerned, States, NGOs and international organisations. The Convention on Cluster Munitions is a 'good news story' and Ireland is proud of its role in the process and to be on the roll of honour of States that have completed ratification. The Convention is an achievement in itself but also an important statement of the potential of multilateral diplomacy. Ireland noted that the pace of the CCM has been sustained and that it will think about how the Convention's entry into force could be marked.

Ireland welcomed the offer by Lao PDR to host the 1MSP and promoted the UNGA resolution co-sponsored by Ireland and Lao PDR which it hopes will be adopted by consensus. Ireland said that the goal of universalisation must continue and strongly encourages all UN member states to sign and ratify the Convention.



Indonesia announced it has started to take the necessary steps to ratify the Convention including sensitization of the Convention among stakeholders including Defence and parliamentarians together with CMC members. Indonesia announced that in order to promote universalisation in the region, which is the most cluster munitions affected region, it is hosting a regional conference in Bali from 16 – 17 November and urged all of the 30 invited countries to register to participate.



Croatia thanked CMC for spearheading efforts to promote the Convention. As an affected country, Croatia expressed the importance in its voice being heard in events such as this and said that the event would help to accelerate progress. Croatia said it looked forward to entry into force and is committed to implementation. It extended its appreciation to Lao PDR for its offer to host the 1MSP and described the Convention as "... important as part of the broader agenda, but for us it is a matter of life and death".



Zambia noted that since the last UN Special Event on 18 March, it had completed ratification being the 15th country to ratify the Convention. Zambia urged other States to ratify the Convention. Zambia also noted that it was one of the 85 countries to participate in the Berlin Conference on the destruction of cluster munition stockpiles and commended Lao PDR for its offer to host the 1MSP and said that it looked forward to participating in the global preparatory meeting in Chile next year.

Norway said that it was proud to be a founding member of the club of countries that have ratified the Convention, but that this group was still too exclusive and that it is important to expand it. The ratification of the Convention is a milestone but it has already changed the view of cluster munitions to be that of politically unacceptable weapons. Norway expressed the need for implementation to start now. The Oslo Process was an inclusive, multi-stakeholder process and although the negotiation of the Convention in this ad hoc and modern way, Norway reminded delegates that the UN fully participated in the process and is now the depository for the Convention.



Spain said that it is a former producer, stockpiler and exporter of cluster munitions but has renounced the weapon by joining the Convention. Spain announced that it has completed the destruction of its stockpiles but kept a “small” number for training only. The representative also noted by prioritising ratification of the Convention, Spain was able to become the 10th country to ratify. The Spanish experience demonstrates that if there is political will everything can be done quickly, and encouraged countries to ratify as speedily as possible.



Belgium announced that procedures for ratification had almost been completed and hoped to complete by the end of the year. Belgium encouraged other states to ratify and said that it looked forward to implementation and entry into force.