



## **From Words to Action on Cluster Bombs Questions and Answers on the Convention on Cluster Munitions – April 2010**

- **Why is 2010 a crucial year for the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions?**

With the Convention on Cluster Munitions due to enter into force on 1 August 2010 and the First Meeting of States Parties taking place from 8-12 November, 2010 is a crucial year for the international movement to tackle this weapon. Throughout 2010, campaigners will be urging hold-out states to get on board the ban and will be working with governments to lay solid foundations to implement the treaty's obligations for years to come.

- **What is the Cluster Munition Coalition?**

The Cluster Munition Coalition is an international civil society campaign active in some 90 countries. Our core objective is to put an end to the suffering caused by cluster bombs. We see three main ways to achieve this: 1) promoting **universal adherence to the Convention on Cluster Munitions**; 2) **promoting implementation and full compliance with the Convention**; and 3) **raising public awareness of the harm caused by cluster munitions and the need for action to tackle this weapon**.

- **How did the Convention on Cluster Munitions achieve 'entry into force'?**

International treaties "enter into force" and become binding international law after the number of states specified in the treaty have ratified. A total of 30 ratifications were required to trigger entry into force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions six months later. On 16 February 2010, Burkina Faso and Moldova ratified the Convention, becoming the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> states to ratify and triggering an entry into force date of 1 August 2010. It took only 14 months from the time the Convention opened for signature in December 2008 until the 30<sup>th</sup> ratification was achieved in February 2010, a very swift pace compared with other international treaties. For a complete current list of states that have signed and ratified the treaty, please visit: <http://www.stopclustermunitions.org/treatystatus/>

- **What is the significance of the entry into force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions?**

This swift entry into force is a reflection of the growing international revulsion toward cluster munitions and the civilian harm they cause. The entry into force of such a major piece of international humanitarian law is a rare and special occasion. The Convention on Cluster Munitions builds on the positive emerging practice in international multilateral diplomacy where collective solutions are developed through collaborative partnerships. The Convention is the result of dedicated efforts between progressive states, the United Nations and other international organisations and civil society groups working with survivors of cluster bombs.

- **What will happen on entry into force for the Convention on Cluster Munitions?**

On 1 August 2010, all of the provisions of the Convention on Cluster Munitions become fully and legally binding for the countries that have signed and ratified it. The clock will start ticking for these States Parties to meet their obligations, which include: declaring and destroying stockpiled cluster munitions within eight years, identifying and clearing cluster munition-contaminated areas within 10 years, and assisting affected communities and cluster munition survivors so that they can be fully included in society and enjoy their fundamental human rights.

- **What actions are planned to mark the Convention's entry into force?**

CMC member organisations worldwide will celebrate this historic milestone through a number of campaign actions in their own countries to mark entry into force, including beating the drum to ban cluster bombs. In the lead-up to entry into force, the CMC will be calling on non-signatory countries to join the Convention without delay. We'll also remind ratifying countries that, as of 1 August, the clock begins ticking on deadlines to destroy stockpiles and clear contaminated land. The CMC will mark entry into force in partnership with governments that have joined the Convention as well as United Nations agencies and international organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross.

- **What is the next major milestone after entry into force?**

Approximately 100 days after the Convention takes effect on 1 August 2010, the government of Lao PDR will host the First Meeting of States Parties in its capital, Vientiane, from 8-12 November 2010.

In the period between entry into force and this meeting, the CMC will be encouraging as many states to attend the Lao PDR meeting as possible, regardless of whether they have joined the Convention on Cluster Munitions. All states are welcome to attend the First Meeting of States Parties: those who have signed and ratified, as well as countries that remain outside the Convention.

## **First Meeting of States Parties – 8-12 November 2010**

- **What is the First Meeting of States Parties?**

The First Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions will be held in Vientiane, Lao PDR from 8-12 November 2010. This is expected to be a defining moment in the life of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. This meeting will lay the foundation for future engagement on the Convention by bringing together for the first time States Parties to the treaty, UN agencies, international organisations, civil society, and cluster bomb survivors. States will share progress and plans for implementation, with the aim of drawing up a blueprint to translate the treaty into action and meet the lifesaving obligations they have consented to be bound by.

- **Why is the meeting being held in Lao PDR?**

Lao PDR is a highly appropriate venue for the Convention's First Meeting of States Parties. Lao PDR is the most heavily bombed country in the world, and the scale of devastation caused by cluster bombs is immense and shocking. Known locally as "bombies," unexploded cluster submunitions are still commonplace in Lao PDR nearly four decades after armed conflict ended. Government surveys have recorded more than 50,000 civilian casualties caused by cluster bombs, landmines and other unexploded ordnance since 1964, and widespread contamination by explosive remnants of war hinders development. Holding such a meeting in an affected country helps to remind government officials and other participants why the treaty exists and why it must be implemented.

- **What needs to be done in the run-up to the Vientiane meeting?**

The CMC encourages all states to attend the Vientiane meeting from 8-12 November. States that have already ratified the treaty should encourage others to get on board, especially neighbouring countries and affected states, as well as users and stockpilers of cluster munitions. States should develop a clear plan of action to implement the treaty. In particular, States Parties that have used or stockpiled cluster munitions should come to Vientiane with concrete plans and timelines for destroying their stockpiles, as well as for helping affected countries to clear cluster munition remnants and assist survivors and affected communities. Civil society groups should look upon this meeting as a unique opportunity to help the people and communities suffering from cluster bomb use. The CMC will look to civil society partners to raise the profile of the Convention on Cluster Munitions amongst policy-makers, the media and the public at large, to shine a light on the civilian harm caused by the weapon, and to focus attention on the Vientiane meeting as a conduit for action to put an end to the suffering in all countries affected by cluster bombs.

- **What does the CMC expect to happen in Vientiane?**

The CMC sees the Vientiane meeting as an opportunity like no other to find lasting solutions to the problems caused by cluster bomb use, not only in Lao PDR, but in Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan and beyond. At the conference, all stakeholders will work to develop an ambitious plan of action to implement the Convention's provisions and monitor progress. This action plan will provide for the full and effective implementation, in practical terms, of each treaty obligation. States bound by the treaty should commit at the meeting to taking urgent action on their treaty obligations. States will have to agree on how they will report on their progress in implementation – each State Party is obliged to report on an annual basis and the first annual deadline is 1 February 2011. All participants should leave the Vientiane meeting with an appreciation for the shocking scale of cluster bomb contamination in affected countries "from Lao to Lebanon" and beyond, as well as the weapons' lingering negative impact – for years or even decades – on civilian lives and livelihoods. The CMC will continue to stress the importance of gaining universal acceptance of and adherence to the Convention in the coming

years, urging as many states as possible to get on board the treaty and help to promote the norms it establishes.

In practical terms, the CMC expects States Parties to agree to a strong political declaration committing them to end the suffering caused by cluster munitions, to an ambitious action plan for universalising and implementing the Convention, to strong structures and mechanisms to facilitate implementation, and to a lasting partnership with civil society to eliminate cluster munitions.