

The Cluster Munition Coalition is led by a Steering Committee of:
Human Rights Watch, Landmine Action and Norwegian People's Aid (Co-Chairs)
DanChurchAid, Handicap International, International Campaign to Ban Landmines,
IPPNW Russia, Zambia, Landmine Resource Centre (Lebanon,) Mines Action Canada,
Pax Christi, Protection (Egypt), Survivor Corps.



Minister Jorge Enrique Taiana
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Relations, International Trade and Worship
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Dear Minister Taiana,

I am writing on behalf of the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) to urge Argentina to sign the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions. This is a significant year for this important humanitarian agreement as it marks two important milestones. The Convention will enter into force on 1 August and Lao PDR will host the First Meeting of States Parties (1MSP) from 8-12 November with the support of the United Nations. In the 100 days counting down to entry into force, the CMC is encouraging states that have not yet joined the Convention to do so as soon as possible.

Cluster munitions kill and injure innocent civilians both during conflict and long after a conflict has ended. The international treaty prohibits cluster munitions, requires destruction of stockpiled cluster munitions within eight years and clearance of contaminated land within 10 years, and recognises the rights of individuals and communities affected by the weapon to receive assistance. States Parties to the Convention are required to support affected states in fulfilling their treaty obligations. Since December 2008, a total of 106 governments have signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions, including 14 countries in Latin America.

This Convention has set a new global benchmark in the conduct of armed conflict and will quickly become a standard by which all states are judged. While over a third of stockpiler countries have joined the Convention, as well as significant former users, even those outside have taken steps in line with this emerging global norm. It is inconceivable that any international instrument as strong as this Convention could be negotiated on cluster munitions elsewhere.

Argentina has stated that it has never used cluster munitions, and that it has already destroyed its stockpile. Argentina was an active participant in the Oslo Process and would add significant weight to the Convention by joining as a regional leader in Latin America. By joining the Convention at an early stage, Argentina will have the opportunity to work with likeminded states, organisations and civil society to shape the future implementation of the Convention and the common understanding of its provisions.

In particular, Argentina could support efforts underway by various actors, including the CMC, to ensure that Article 21 is not interpreted as a loophole allowing States Parties to assist states not party with prohibited acts. Rather, this article must be seen as an obligation to promote universal adherence to the Convention and an obligation on States Parties to prevent use of cluster munitions by their partners in joint military operations. Similarly, as a future State Party Argentina could help maintain vigilance on weapons systems that fall outside the Convention's definition of a cluster munition to ensure that no such weapons with the effects of cluster munitions are allowed for use by States Parties to the Convention.

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Every country wishing to prevent further suffering from the horrors of cluster munitions should join the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The stigma established by the global ban means any future production or export of cluster munitions would result in a strong public and political backlash. We urge all countries to join as soon as possible and to participate in the upcoming First Meeting of States Parties (1MSP) that will be hosted in Vientiane, Lao PDR from 8-12 November 2010. We hope to see you in Vientiane.

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C.C.

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