

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



H.E. Pham Gia Khiem
Deputy Prime Minister
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10 May 2010

Dear Deputy Prime Minister,

I am writing on behalf of the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) to urge the Government of Vietnam 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 Vietnam's close neighbour Lao PDR will host the First Meeting of States Parties (1MSP) from 8-12 November. 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. There is no better time to join the Convention than this year.

Because of their wide area effect, cluster munitions kill and injure too many civilians during conflict and leave large amounts of unexploded ordnance that continue to kill and injure civilians long after a conflict has ended. The new Convention comprehensively 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. It also obliges all countries to support affected states in fulfilling their obligations. Since December 2008, a total of 106 governments have signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions including stockpilers, former users and producers of the weapon as well as the majority of affected countries.

As a country affected by cluster munitions, Vietnam should benefit from the Convention's legally binding provisions on international cooperation and assistance, which should result in concrete projects and plans to assist communities affected by these weapons. As a neighbour to Lao PDR, the country most heavily affected by cluster munitions, we wish to encourage you to demonstrate your regional solidarity by joining this crucial humanitarian agreement. This action by the Government of Vietnam will help prevent future injuries and deaths from these weapons in Vietnam, in neighbouring Lao PDR and around the world and would also help cluster munitions in their rehabilitation and integration into society.

We are grateful for the Vietnamese statement given to CMC during a meeting at the Permanent Mission of Vietnam to the United Nations in Geneva on 12 April this year. In this statement Vietnam noted that it "is still considering the possibility to accede to the Convention on Cluster Munitions when appropriate." On behalf of CMC, I would like to emphasise that we stand ready to support Vietnam in any way we can to facilitate a positive outcome to this consideration process.

We believe every country wishing to prevent further suffering from the horrors of cluster munitions should join the Convention on Cluster Munitions and help stigmatise these weapons so that no country will ever use them again. 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.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "T. Nash", written in a cursive style.

Thomas Nash
Coordinator
Cluster Munition Coalition



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C.c:

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