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Norwegian official: Lebanon symbolizes need for cluster munitions ban - September 16, 2011

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BEIRUT: In 2006, Norway took a leading role in establishing the Oslo Process that led to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. It was opened for signature in the Norwegian capital in December 2008.

The Scandinavian country has never itself been affected by cluster munitions. It also used to store one out of the 12 types of cluster munitions condemned by Human Rights Watch.

The Norwegian government began taking action on the cluster bomb issue in 2005, after a new coalition government came to power.

“There was a recognition that if we want to take this process internationally, then we must [first] rid ourselves of our own ammunition,” according to Gry Larsen, Norway’s deputy foreign minister, who is in Beirut this week to attend the Second Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

“There is no doubt that what happened in Lebanon contributed to [accelerating] the [convention’s] progress. What happened here became such an extreme example of what all this is about,” said Larsen, referring to the cluster munitions that killed or disabled around 400 people during and after the war with Israel in July and August 2006.

While in Lebanon, Larsen visited the south to see the effects of cluster munitions there.

“I was in southern Lebanon today. You stand there and look around you and you know that there are cluster munitions that have been dropped around the area ... There is no doubt that what happened was on a grand scale,” she says.

Israel has said its use of cluster munitions in 2006 followed international humanitarian law. It also says most of the bombs were dropped in areas used mostly by Hezbollah fighters.

Larsen disagrees. “They are everywhere,” she exclaimed. “They are in populated areas. They are clearing cluster munitions from houses, from agricultural areas close to houses, where people move, [and] on roads.”

According to the anti-cluster bomb group Cluster Munition Coalition, there are today 37 countries in the world that are currently suffering from the existence of cluster munitions. Cluster bombs often fail to explode immediately, and can continue to kill several years after being used. Many of the affected are farmers and children.

Oslo backed a 2007 report that concluded that the cluster munition type M85, which Israel used in Lebanon in 2006, had a significantly higher likelihood of resulting in unexploded ordinance when used in conflict than previous tests had shown.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions has been signed by more than 100 states, while 63 have ratified it. It bans the use, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions. It also requires countries to clear contaminated areas and destroy supplies, as well as provide assistance to victims and affected communities.

The U.S., China and Russia are three major powers that have not signed the convention, but Larsen still believes that the convention is a success.

“It is effective ... I think one of the great things about the convention is that we save lives. The convention has done that. We have cleared munitions and countries have committed themselves to not use cluster munitions. Most importantly, it has created an international norm,” she said.

Larsen argues that countries will no longer be able to use the munitions without facing international pressure. She refers to Thailand, which along with Libya, is one of the two countries that have used cluster munitions this year.

“What happened in Thailand was that after they used them, they saw the consequences of this and they have now entered [into] a dialogue related to the country’s cluster munitions.”

“I think that the convention in many ways has become larger than itself. Larger than the countries that have signed and ratified it,” Larsen said.

In an email exchange, Amanda Johnson, a spokesperson for the U.S. Embassy in Lebanon, told The Daily Star that the U.S. has invested more than \$43.4 million “in assistance for land mine and unexploded ordinance clearance in Lebanon, including unexploded submunitions.”

Larsen said she was pleased that the U.S. was investing money to clear cluster munitions, but voiced the opinion that Washington could go further.

“I would urge the United States to sign and to ratify the convention.”

The U.S. is not represented at the meeting in Beirut. China, however, which has also not signed, has sent a delegation. Larsen declined to speculate why some states choose to send delegations, while others do not.

She described the initial skepticism that greeted early efforts to combat the use of cluster munitions.

“However, momentum was created,” she said. “It was such a strong alliance that the opposition that we [once] encountered did not have the power to change the goal.”



Pakistan pavilion shut down after banned weapon ads caught at UK expo - September 16, 2011
<http://tribune.com.pk/story/253543/pakistani-pavilion-shut-down-after-banned-weapon-ads-caught-at-uk-expo/>

KARACHI: Defence & Security Equipment international (DSEi) permanently shut down the Pakistan Ordnance Factory (POF) stand and Pakistan’s Defence Export Promotion Organisation Pavilion after promotional material was found on both containing references to cluster bombs at the London expo.

A DSEi statement said that promotional material was found containing references, which on closer inspection were found to be in breach of UK Government Export Controls and the exhibitions own contractual requirements.

The statement posted on the DSEi website further read that the British Government fully supported the decision by DSEi to close the stand and the Pavilion.

The Pakistani arms companies were found distributing brochures bearing advertisement for banned cluster bombs at the expo.

Cluster bombs, are banned in UK under the UK export control act 2002. They are also prohibited under the explicit acknowledgement of the exhibitors.

Brochures obtained from Pakistan Government companies clearly list cluster munitions including 155mm artillery ammunition containing 88 sub-munitions (weapons having an area of effect damage).

A brochure obtained from the Pakistan Ordnance Factory (POF) lists the 155mm BB DPICM (artillery ammunition containing 45 sub-munitions).

While a brochure obtained from Pakistan's Defence Export Promotion Organization (DEPO, Stand S7-265) entitled "Public and private sector companies and their commercial products," listed the government owned POF (page 9) as able to supply 155mm HOW HE ICM M483A1 (cluster munition containing 88 sub-munitions).

The brochure also listed the Armament Research & Development Establishment (ARDE) [page 5, section e, sub point 3] being able to supply programmable sub-munition dispensers.

The objections were raised by a British Member of Parliament, Caroline Lucas. She also pointed out to the double standard of the exhibitors who were simultaneously holding a conference on cluster bombs, the "Second Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions" in Lebanon which seeks to eliminate the usage of cluster munitions.

The Guardian reported that some Pakistani arms manufacturing companies were also advertising gold plated sub-machineguns as 'collectors items'.

Cluster bombs gained notoriety when the US used their infamous daisy cutters during their Afghan campaign.