

The Cluster Munition Coalition is led by a Governance Board of:

Afghan Landmine Survivors Organisation, Action On Armed Violence, Asociación para Políticas Públicas-APP, Cambodia Campaign to Ban Landmines, Campaña Colombiana Contra Minas, DanChurchAid, Handicap International, Human Rights Watch, ICBL Georgian Committee, IKV Pax Christi, IPPNW, Japan Campaign to Ban landmines, Mines Action Canada, Nepal Campaign to Ban Landmines, Norwegian People's Aid, Protection and Religions for Peace.



+++++++ PRESS RELEASE+++++++

Global public outcry at plans to allow use of cluster bombs States urged to keep their word to ban the weapon

Geneva, 14 November 2011: Governments should support the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions and not create a new contrary international law permitting use of these weapons said the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) today, as two weeks of negotiations begin at the United Nations in Geneva.

“Countries that are resisting the ban on cluster munitions should stop trying to create a new international law explicitly permitting these weapons,” said Steve Goose, CMC Chair and Executive Director of Human Rights Watch’s Arms Division.

“Cluster munitions were banned three years ago due to the unacceptable harm that they cause to civilians. It’s reprehensible to even consider creating another law allowing their use,” Goose added.

Diplomatic representatives from approximately 100 countries are meeting in Geneva from November 14-25 for the Fourth Review Conference of the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW), where the main order of business is an effort to conclude negotiations on a new CCW protocol on cluster munitions that would allow continued use, production, trade, and stockpiling of the weapon.

Campaigners around the world have been urging governments to support the Convention on Cluster Munitions, signed or ratified by 111 governments, and not create another law through the CCW.

Since its launch at around 14:00GMT on Thursday 11 November the CMC and global web movement Avaaz have collected half a million signatures from people in the vast majority of the world’s countries, supporting the call to protect civilians from cluster munitions by not accepting the CCW protocol.

“This huge global outcry shows that everyone ‘gets’ this issue, it’s a no-brainer: cluster munitions are banned because they kill too many civilians, and they should be banned by every nation,” said Sylvie Brigot-Vilain, Executive Director of the CMC.

“It’s time to end these costly and dangerous deliberations and focus on making the existing ban work to rid the world of this devastating weapon,” Brigot-Vilain added.

Of the 119 countries that have joined the CCW, 76 have also joined the Convention on Cluster Munitions so are already bound by the higher standards it contains. However, some of these nations that have banned the weapon have also been supportive of the weak protocol, including France, Australia, Germany, and the United Kingdom.

Emma Ruby-Sachs, campaign director at Avaaz said: "Hundreds of thousands of people across the world have raised their voices in support of the hard won treaty to ban cluster bombs. They are calling on their governments to stand up to US bullying and ensure these cruel and indiscriminate weapons aren't reintroduced at this week's meeting, endangering innocent lives."

As an alternative to passing a protocol, the CMC urges states that have not already banned cluster munitions to agree to a political declaration incorporating the positive elements of CCW discussions and to undertake interim measures at the national level toward joining the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

The 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions comprehensively bans the weapon, requires destruction of stockpiles within eight years, clearance of areas contaminated by cluster munitions within 10 years, and assistance to victims of the weapon. By contrast, the proposed CCW protocol is weak and replete with exceptions, loopholes, and deferral periods, so that little humanitarian impact can be achieved.

Key issues of concern include:

- An exception that allows for continued use of any cluster munitions that have been made after 1 January 1980. In other words, the protocol only bans cluster munitions more than 30 years old, and therefore unlikely to be used anyway. All known incidents of cluster munition use since 2008 (by Thailand, Cambodia, the United States, Georgia and Russia) have involved weapons produced after 1 January 1980.
- An exemption that allows use of cluster munitions with a failure rate of 1 per cent or less. Actual failure rates of cluster munitions in combat situations are far higher than claimed failure rates based on testing. The Israeli-made M85 used in Lebanon in 2006, for example, is presented as having a less than 1 per cent failure rate but has an observed failure rate of more than 10 per cent on the ground.
- Another exception allows use of cluster munitions with only one so-called safeguard mechanism (i.e. a self-destruct mechanism). Cluster munitions with self-destruct mechanisms also leave large numbers of unexploded submunitions on the ground, contrary to claims made by their producers.
- A deferral period of 12 years that allows states to continue using cluster munitions that later will be banned by the protocol. The protocol claims to want to address the “urgency” of the humanitarian danger caused by cluster munitions, but will actually allow states to defer its terms for at least 12 years meaning they can continue with impunity to use cluster munitions they have acknowledged cause unacceptable humanitarian problems.

The CMC, which has been following these negotiations since they started, will have a delegation of experts at the negotiations that run from today until Friday 25 November.

Ends

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The Cluster Munition Coalition

<http://www.stopclustermunitions.org>

Notes to editors:

For more information, see:

- Avaaz petition: http://www.avaaz.org/en/cluster_bombs_ii_b/?fpla
- Draft chair’s text of CCW protocol on cluster munitions: <http://bit.ly/ozC7iY>
- CMC on Facebook: www.facebook.com/banclusterbombs
- CMC on Twitter: www.twitter.com/@banclusterbombs

- CMC on Storify: <http://storify.com/banclusterbombs/convention-on-conventional-weapons-review-conference>

About cluster bombs:

A cluster munition (or cluster bomb) is a weapon containing multiple - often hundreds - of small explosive submunitions or bomblets. Cluster munitions are dropped from the air or fired from the ground and designed to break open in mid-air, releasing the submunitions over an area that can be the size of several football fields. This means they cannot discriminate between civilians and soldiers. Many of the submunitions fail to explode on impact and remain a threat to lives and livelihoods for decades after a conflict.

About the Convention on Cluster Munitions:

The Convention on Cluster Munitions bans the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions and requires countries to clear affected areas within 10 years and destroy stockpiles of the weapon within eight. The Convention includes groundbreaking provisions requiring assistance to victims and affected communities. Signed in Oslo in December 2008, the Convention entered into force as binding international law on 1 August 2010 and is the most significant international disarmament treaty since the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty banning antipersonnel landmines.

About the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC):

The CMC is an international coalition with more than 350 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in around 100 countries to encourage urgent action against cluster bombs. The CMC facilitates NGO efforts worldwide to educate governments, the public and the media about the problems of cluster munitions and to urge universalisation and full implementation of the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions.

111 countries have joined the Convention on Cluster Munitions (full States Parties - bold):

Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Comoros, DR Congo, Republic of Congo, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Côte D'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Fiji, France, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, The Holy See, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia FYR, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Palau, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Rwanda, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, St. Vincent and Grenadines, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Uganda, United Kingdom, Uruguay, and Zambia. See www.stopclustermunitions.org/treatystatus for details.