



1 AUGUST 2010
BEAT THE DRUM
to ban cluster bombs



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FACT SHEET

The Convention on Cluster Munitions and New Zealand

1 August 2010

Cluster munitions (or bombs) are weapons that can be fired by artillery and rocket systems or dropped by aircraft, and typically explode in the air and send dozens, even hundreds, of tiny submunitions (or bomblets) indiscriminately over an area the size of a football field. Cluster submunitions often fail to explode on initial impact, leaving duds that act like landmines and pose danger to civilians.

Cluster munitions used by the United States and others have killed and maimed civilians in thirty-one countries including Afghanistan, Iraq, Laos, and Serbia. In July and August 2006, Israel launched an estimated 4 million cluster submunitions on south Lebanon targeting many populated areas. Approximately one million of these explosive devices failed to detonate on impact and continue to threaten lives and render land inaccessible.

In late 2007, Norway announced its intent to lead a process outside the United Nations to negotiate an international treaty to stop cluster munitions from causing unacceptable harm to civilians. Negotiated in Dublin, Ireland in May 2008 and opened for signature in Oslo, Norway in December 2008, the Convention on Cluster Munitions completely prohibits the use, production, and trade of cluster munitions, requires destruction of stockpiled cluster munitions within eight years, clearance of cluster munition-contaminated areas within ten years, and assistance to affected communities and cluster munition survivors.

To date, a total of 107 governments have signed the Convention, of which 38 have ratified. Albania, Austria, Belgium, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Comoros, Croatia, Denmark, Ecuador, Fiji, France, Germany, Holy See, Ireland, Japan, Laos, Lesotho, Luxembourg, Macedonia FYR, Malawi, Mali, Malta, Mexico, Moldova, Montenegro, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Norway, Samoa, San Marino, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Spain, Seychelles, United Kingdom, Uruguay, and Zambia.

Ratification enables these countries to participate as full States Parties to the Convention at its First Meeting of States Parties to be held in Vientiane, Lao PDR from November 8-12, 2010. Laos is one of the countries most affected from cluster munitions dropped by the United States over 30 years ago during the Vietnam War.

From the Pacific, Fiji and Samoa ratified the convention during 2010, while Cook Islands, Niue, and Palau have signed, but not yet ratified. Five more Pacific governments participated in the Oslo Process to ban cluster bombs, expressing their support for the goal of

the Convention, but did not sign: Marshall Islands, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Vanuatu. The other Pacific non-signatories are Kiribati, FS Micronesia, Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu. All but three Pacific states (FS Micronesia, Tonga, Tuvalu) have banned antipersonnel landmines by joining the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty.

On August 1, the provisions of the Convention on Cluster Munitions became fully and legally binding in New Zealand and in 106 other countries around the world that have joined the convention.

New Zealand

New Zealand was an early supporter of diplomatic efforts to deal with cluster munitions and in 2007 became a member of the “Core Group” of seven nations that took responsibility for the Oslo Process to ban cluster bombs. Two teams from the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) deployed to Lebanon in 2007 and 2008 to help clean-up cluster munition duds.

The Aotearoa New Zealand Cluster Munition Coalition was publicly launched on 5 November 2007 at Civic Square in the capital of Wellington. A light plane circled above the Wellington dispersing hundreds a cluster bomb-shaped flyers petitioning then-Minister of Disarmament Hon. Phil Goff for a ban on the weapon. The action, which took place at 1:00pm local time (00.00 GMT), set off a Global Day of Action Against Cluster Bombs supported by events across the world. It was followed in Wellington that evening with a multimedia talk in the McKenzie Theater at Capital E by visiting Australian photographer John Rodsted.

The Wellington Town Hall was the venue for a crucial diplomatic meeting held on 18-22 February 2008 to lay the basis for the subsequent negotiation and adoption of the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions. More than 100 government representatives attended the Wellington Conference on Cluster Munitions, in addition to survivors, campaigners, and deminers. During the conference, on 20 February, more than 1,000 people participated in a chalk ‘lie-down’ petition-gathering event in Civic Square, directly outside the Town Hall.

New Zealand’s Minister of Disarmament and Arms Control, Hon. Georgina Te Heuheu, introduced comprehensive legislation to implement the treaty on 21 July 2009. After review by the Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Trade Select Committee, the New Zealand parliament unanimously passed the Cluster Munitions Prohibition Act of 2009 on 10 December 2009 and it was signed into law a week later. On 22 December 2009, New Zealand became the 25th state to ratify the convention, helping to propel the Convention on Cluster Munitions to 'enter into force' or become legally binding international law on 1 August 2010.

For more information, see:

- Cluster Munitions Prohibition Act of 2009 – <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2009/0068/latest/DLM2171615.html>
- Aotearoa New Zealand Cluster Munition Coalition website – www.stopclusterbombs.org.nz
- List of worldwide events for August 1st – www.stopclustermunitions.org/august1