



PRESS RELEASE

NEW ZEALAND TO FUND CLUSTER BOMB CLEARANCE IN LAOS

Milestone meeting opens in Vientiane

(Vientiane, Lao PDR: 10 November 2010) New Zealand's announcement of funding for the clearance of cluster bomb remnants in Lao People's Democratic Republic will help save lives and promote economic development, said the Aotearoa New Zealand Cluster Munition Coalition (ANZCMC) today.

"This donation by New Zealand will help prevent further casualties to cluster bombs, landmines, and other explosive remnants of war in a country that urgently requires international assistance," said Mary Wareham, Coordinator of the Aotearoa New Zealand Cluster Munition Coalition. "The funding is also clear demonstration of New Zealand's commitment to ensuring that all members of the Convention on Cluster Munitions are able to implement its provisions," she added.

New Zealand's Minister of Disarmament and Arms Control, Hon. Georgina Te Heuheu, announced the contribution of NZ\$1 million in her statement to the First Meeting of States Parties to the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions, which is being held in Vientiane, Lao PDR from 9-12 November 2010. More than 100 governments are attending this milestone meeting of the convention, which prohibits cluster munitions, requires clearance of land contaminated by the weapon, and provides for assistance to victims of cluster munitions. A total of 108 countries have signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions, of which 46 have ratified.

According to *Cluster Munition Monitor 2010*, the United States dropped more than two million tonnes of bombs on Lao PDR between 1964 and 1973, including more than 270 million submunitions. Up to 30% of the bombs dropped (81 million) are believed to have failed to explode. Today, ten of Lao PDR's 17 provinces are "severely contaminated" by explosive remnants of war, affecting up to one-quarter of all villages.

"UXO Lao," the largest clearance operator in Lao PDR, will receive the New Zealand donation via a UNDP trust fund. In 2009, UXO Lao cleared 25 square kilometers of affected land, destroying 16,235 cluster submunitions or "bombies" in the process.

New Zealand signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions on 3 December 2008 and ratified on 22 December 2009, the 25th country to do so. Legislation to enforce its provisions, the Cluster Munitions Prohibition Act of 2009, was enacted on 17 December 2009.

Wareham and ANZCMC member Chris Kerr of Amnesty International NZ are participating in the civil society delegation to the meeting, which is comprised of over 400 campaigners from more than 80 countries. At the Lao PDR meeting, governments are expected to agree to a strong political declaration of commitment to eradicating cluster munitions urgently, and to an ambitious action plan laying out concrete steps for the coming year and beyond.

Later this week Wareham will hand over a donation of NZ \$4,000 raised by students at Rangitoto College in Auckland. These funds are being given to the Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise (COPE), an NGO that is the only provider of prosthetic, orthotic and rehabilitation services in Laos. Forty percent of COPE's patients are affected by disability from unexploded ordnance including cluster bombs.

The Aotearoa New Zealand Cluster Munition Coalition (ANZCMC) is overseen by a working group of 24 non governmental organizations (NGOs).

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For more information, please see:

- Aotearoa New Zealand Cluster Munition Coalition - <http://www.stopclusterbombs.org.nz/>
- Statement by Minister of Disarmament and Arms Control - <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/speech/first+meeting+states+parties+convention+cluster+munitions>
- Rangitoto College <http://www.rangitoto.school.nz/>
- Cope LAOS – <http://www.copelaos.org/>
- First Meeting of States Parties - <http://www.clusterconvention.org/1msp/>
- *Cluster Munition Monitor 2010* - <http://www.the-monitor.org>