



US Government Supports “Go Slow” Approach on Cluster Bomb Ban US Campaign to Ban Landmines Calls for U.S. Legislation

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The United States worked this week with a small group of other powerful nations to undermine efforts to negotiate a legally binding treaty to ban the stockpiling, use, transfer and manufacturing of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians, the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines said today.

This new initiative follows the Bush administration’s decision to oppose legislation introduced in the U.S. Congress that would prohibit the use of U.S. cluster munitions in civilian populated areas.

After a week of negotiations in Geneva, the countries that are party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) agreed today to consider proposals to begin negotiations on cluster munitions next year without stipulating what the negotiations are intended to accomplish or even requiring that the end result would be a legally-binding instrument that would stop the parties from using these weapons in a way that results in high levels of civilian casualties.

The U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines supports the international effort begun in Oslo in 2007, now endorsed by more than 80 countries, to negotiate a legally binding treaty by the end of 2008 that would ban the use of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians. The U.S. government has refused to join this effort and has instead attempted to channel opposition to cluster bombs into the consensus based forum at the CCW, which has no fixed end date and no fixed goal.

“The CCW has once again failed to deliver on cluster munitions,” said Steve Goose, the director of the Arms Division of Human Rights Watch, which is on the steering committee of the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines. “Any country that is serious about trying to deal with the horrific humanitarian consequences of cluster munitions will now throw all its weight behind the Oslo Process and sign a ban treaty in 2008,” said Goose. “While the CCW inches along toward an unknown destination, almost certainly headed nowhere, the Oslo Process is racing forward with definite direction toward a ban treaty in 2008 that will save lives.”

Given U.S. opposition to the Oslo process, the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines is working actively to persuade Congress to pass the Cluster Munitions Civilian Protection Act (S. 594/H.R. 1755) that would prevent the use of U.S. cluster munitions in civilian populated areas of any country.

“We were saddened when the U.S. government refused to join the majority of the countries of the world in working to ban cluster munitions through the Oslo Process,” explained Lora Lumpe, the coordinator of the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines. “Then we were astounded when the State Department declared that the U.S. government could not support legislation preventing the bombing of civilians. Now the Bush administration, recognizing that tide has shifted against these weapons, is trying to appear to be doing something positive while doing nothing.”

For more information on the CCW negotiations in Geneva see <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/11/13/global17320.htm>

For more information on the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines www.uscbl.org

For more information on the Cluster Munitions Civilian Protection Act http://www.fcni.org/issues/issue.php?issue_id=138

Notes to editors:

- o Cluster munitions are weapons that can disperse hundreds of smaller submunitions – sometimes referred to as “bomblets” - over wide areas. They have indiscriminate wide area effects that kill and injure civilians during attacks and they leave severe and lasting humanitarian and development consequences from large quantities of post-conflict unexploded ordnance.
- o The following 83 states are participating in the Oslo Process: Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Chad, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea Bissau, Holy See, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Lao PDR, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Montenegro, Mozambique, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, UK, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yemen and Zambia.
- o The dates of the future Oslo Process conferences are: Vienna 4-7 December; Wellington 18-22 February; Dublin 19-30 May.
- o At least 75 countries stockpile cluster munitions and 34 are known to have produced more than 210 types of cluster munitions. 14 states have used cluster munitions in at least 29 countries and territories.