



Press Release

**For Immediate Release
August 2, 2010**

**U.S. Campaigners Celebrate Entry Into Force of Convention on Cluster Munitions;
Call on U.S. to Join Treaty and Attend First Meeting of States Parties**

WASHINGTON, D.C.: The Convention on Cluster Munitions entered into force on August 1, 2010, becoming binding international law. While celebrating the treaty at events throughout the United States on Sunday, campaigners called upon the U.S. to attend the convention's first meeting of States Parties in Vientiane, Lao PDR, this November, and to join the treaty as soon as possible.

"I was proud to see U.S. citizens joining other campaigners from all over the world to celebrate this historic treaty," said Lynn Bradach, an ambassador for the U.S. Campaign to Ban Cluster Bombs. "My son, a U.S. Marine, was killed by a cluster bomb dud explosion during clearance operations in Iraq in 2003. These are barbaric weapons that kill and maim countless innocent men, women and children every day. I organized a drumming event on Sunday in my hometown of Portland to raise awareness and to ask the U.S. to stop using these weapons," she said.

In December 2008, when the treaty opened for signature in Oslo, a spokeswoman for the Obama transition team said that the next president would "carefully review" the new treaty banning cluster munitions and would "work closely [with] our friends and allies to ensure that the United States is doing everything feasible to promote protection of civilians."

The U.S. currently has the largest stockpile of cluster munitions in the world and is a major user, exporter and producer of the weapon. While efforts to restrain the use and trade of cluster munitions are under discussion in Congress, there is no existing domestic law specifically regulating cluster munitions. In the most recent policy review released by U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates in July 2008, cluster munitions were described as a "legitimate weapons with clear military utility." Under the policy, the United States will discontinue producing munitions with a tested failure rate of less than 1 percent by 2018.

The U.S. Campaign to Ban Cluster Bombs calls on the U.S. to attend the First Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, which will be held from November 9-12 in Lao PDR. Lao PDR is the world's most cluster-bombed country—from 1964 to 1973, the U.S. dropped more than 2 million tons of ordnance over Lao, consisting of 270 million cluster bomblets, up to 80 million of which failed to detonate and remain today as *de facto* landmines.

"It is important that the U.S. attend this meeting and be a part of this process now," said Zach Hudson, coordinator for the U.S. Campaign to Ban Cluster Bombs. "This meeting will lay the foundation for how the Convention will be implemented over the coming years. The U.S. should demonstrate leadership on this issue and work with other governments that are actively involved in banning this weapon. The U.S. should also participate with an eye as to how we can move toward accession to the treaty as soon as possible."

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The United States has used cluster munitions in Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam) in the 1960s and 1970s, the Persian Gulf (Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia) in 1991, Yugoslavia (including Kosovo) in 1999, Afghanistan in 2001 and 2002 and Iraq in 2003. On June 7, 2010, Amnesty International also released images of a U.S.-manufactured Tomahawk cruise missile that carried cluster submunitions, apparently taken following an attack on an alleged al-Qaida training camp in the community of al-Ma'jalah in the Abyan area in the south of Yemen. The December 17, 2009, attack reportedly killed 41 civilians, including women and children. In response, the U.S. Campaign to Ban Cluster Bombs has called on the U.S. to confirm or deny this reported use of the weapon.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions was adopted in Dublin, Ireland, on May 30, 2008, and opened for signature in Oslo, Norway, in December 2008. To date, 107 countries have signed the Convention and 37 have ratified. Among them are former users and producers of cluster munitions, as well as countries affected by the weapons. The Convention bans the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions and calls for the destruction of stockpiles within eight years, clearance of cluster munition-contaminated land within 10 years, and assistance for cluster munition survivors and affected communities. On August 1, 2010, all of the Convention's provisions became fully and legally binding for states that have joined.

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The USCBL, currently coordinated by Handicap International, is a coalition of thousands of people and U.S. non-governmental organizations working to: (1) ensure no U.S. use, production, or transfer of antipersonnel landmines and cluster munitions; (2) encourage the U.S. to join the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty and the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions; and (3) secure high levels of U.S. government support for clearance and assistance programs for victims of landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war.

The USCBL is the U.S. affiliate of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL)—the co-laureate of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize—and is a member of the Cluster Munition Coalition, an international coalition working to protect civilians from the effects of cluster munitions by promoting universal adherence to and full implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.