



Cluster bomb ban treaty reaches 30th ratification milestone *Will become binding international law on 1 August 2010*

(London, 16 February 2010) – Burkina Faso and Moldova ratified the international Convention banning cluster munitions today, bringing the total number of ratifications to 30 and triggering entry into force on 1 August 2010, when the Convention will become binding international law.

“The first 30 states to ratify the Convention on Cluster Munitions should be proud of their central role in helping to put an end for all time to the suffering caused by these cruel and unjust weapons,” said Thomas Nash, Coordinator of the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC). “For those not yet on board the Convention, 2010 is the year to get on the right side of history, to get in on the ground floor, and join the ban before the First Meeting of States Parties in November.”

The 30 ratifying countries include states that led the “Oslo Process” effort to create the Convention (Norway, Austria, Holy See, Ireland, Mexico, and New Zealand), states where cluster munitions have been used (Albania, Croatia, Lao PDR, Sierra Leone, and Zambia), cluster munition stockpilers (Belgium, France, Germany, Japan, Moldova, and Slovenia), as well as Spain, the first signatory country to complete destruction of its stockpile. Other ratifying states are: Burkina Faso, Burundi, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malawi, Malta, Nicaragua, Niger, San Marino, and Uruguay.

A total of 104 countries have signed the Convention since it opened for signature in Oslo in December 2008. The Convention comprehensively bans use, production, and transfer of cluster munitions and sets strict deadlines for stockpile destruction and clearance of contaminated land. In addition, the Convention obliges states to support survivors and affected communities.

After the Convention on Cluster Munitions enters into force on 1 August, the next milestone will be the First Meeting of States Parties, which is scheduled to be held in Lao PDR in late 2010. Lao PDR is the country most heavily contaminated by cluster munitions as a result of US bombing more than 30 years ago.

“My country joined the ban treaty because our people have suffered the impact of these deadly ‘bombies’ for decades,” said Phong, a cluster bomb survivor from Lao PDR who is a member of the Ban Advocate initiative of Handicap International Belgium, a CMC founding organisation. “We’re looking forward to welcoming government representatives and campaigners to Vientiane later this year to show the world the immense and shocking legacy of cluster bomb use here.”

“The rapid pace of reaching 30 ratifications – only 15 months – reflects the strong global commitment to get rid of these weapons urgently,” said Steve Goose, CMC co-chair and director of the Arms Division at Human Rights Watch. “Cluster munitions are already stigmatised to the point that no nation should ever use them again, even those who have not yet joined the Convention.”

The Oslo Process and the treaty negotiations were characterised by a close partnership between pro-ban governments, civil society led by the CMC, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and UN agencies, as well as by the leadership of affected states such as Lao PDR and of individual survivors themselves.

Even before the Convention’s entry into force, states have already begun to implement some of its provisions. Last year, Spain announced the destruction of cluster munition stockpiles, and about a dozen other states have begun stockpile destruction. Albania announced in December 2009 that it was the first signatory country to complete clearance of cluster bomblet contamination on its territory.

The CMC urged as many states as possible to sign, ratify, and begin implementation of the Convention before the First Meeting of States Parties in Lao PDR in November. In particular, states that have already ratified the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty and the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities should put their full support behind the cluster bomb ban as well, as all three international treaties enshrine the same humanitarian and human rights principles for assistance to

affected communities and the promotion of dignified lives for survivors and victims of armed violence.

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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, it 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 of around 350 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in 85 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.

<http://www.stopclustermunitions.org/>

The following 104 countries have signed the Convention

Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, 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, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Fiji, France, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, 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, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Malta, 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, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Zambia.

Of these, the following 30 countries have ratified the Convention

Albania (16 Jun 2009), Austria (2 Apr 2009), Belgium (22 Dec 2009), Burkina Faso (16 February 2010), Burundi (25 Sep 2009), Croatia (17 Aug 2009), Denmark (12 February 2010), The Holy See (3 Dec 2008), France (25 Sep 2009), Germany (8 Jul 2009), Ireland (3 Dec 2008), Japan (14 Jul 2009), Lao PDR (18 Mar 2009), Luxembourg (10 Jul 2009), Macedonia (8 Oct 2009), Malawi (7 Oct 2009), Malta (24 Sep 2009), Mexico (6 May 2009), Moldova (16 February 2010), Montenegro (25 January 2010), New Zealand (22 Dec 2009), Nicaragua (6 Nov 2009), Niger (2 Jun 2009), Norway (3 Dec

2008), San Marino (10 Jul 2009), Sierra Leone (3 Dec 2008), Slovenia (19 Aug 2009), Spain (17 Jun 2009), Uruguay (24 Sep 2009), Zambia (12 Aug 2009).