



PRESS RELEASE

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Cluster bomb ban treaty reaches 30th ratification milestone

NEW YORK – The nations of Burkina Faso and Moldova ratified the international treaty banning cluster munitions Tuesday at the U.N., bringing the total number of ratifications to 30 and triggering the treaty’s entry into force on August 1, 2010, when it will become binding international law.

For Handicap International, which has been campaigning for much of the last decade to ban cluster munitions, the Convention on Cluster Munitions represents an unprecedented step forward in international humanitarian law. When the treaty enters into force later this year, no country will be able to use cluster munitions with impunity and victims’ rights will finally be recognized.

“The cluster munitions treaty is the most important disarmament treaty to be developed since the landmine ban entered into force more than ten years ago,” said Ed Kenny, Handicap International’s senior program officer for advocacy. “In addition to the requirements for stockpile destruction and clearance of affected land, it places significant emphasis on assistance to victims, their families and their communities. To achieve a world free of future cluster bomb casualties, we encourage all states to join the treaty.”

“As an American, I especially hope our own country will sign the treaty and play a critical role in showing the world that protection of civilians in time of war is of paramount importance,” added Wendy Batson, executive director of Handicap International.

For Handicap International, a founding organization of the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC), the convention is a means of putting an end to the appalling threat that cluster munitions pose to civilian populations. Handicap International has been working with landmine and cluster munitions victims around the world since the early 1980s and has seen up close the enormous damage these weapons do to individuals, families and communities.

A total of 104 countries have signed the treaty since it opened for signature in Oslo, Norway, 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 treaty obliges states to support survivors and affected communities. Ban Ki-moon, the U.N. Secretary-General, lauded the fact that the treaty attained 30 ratifications in only 15 months, saying it is evidence of “the world’s collective revulsion at the impact of these terrible weapons.”

After the Convention on Cluster Munitions enters into force on August 1, the next milestone will be the First Meeting of States Parties, which is scheduled to be held in Laos in November 2010. Laos is more heavily contaminated by cluster munitions than any other country because of U.S. 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 Laos, who is a member of the [Ban Advocates](#), an initiative for cluster munition survivors and affected communities. “We’re looking forward to welcoming

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government representatives and campaigners to Vientiane later this year to show the world the immense and shocking legacy of cluster bomb use here.”

The Oslo Process and the treaty negotiations were characterized by a close partnership between governments, civil society led by the CMC, the International Committee of the Red Cross and U.N. agencies, as well as by the leadership of affected states, such as Laos, and individual survivors.

Although the convention has yet to enter into force, states have already begun to implement some of its provisions. Last year, Spain announced the destruction of its 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 in its territory.

Handicap International urges all states to sign, ratify and begin implementation of the convention before the First Meeting of States Parties in Laos in November. States that 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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Handicap International works to improve the living conditions of people living in disabling situations in post-conflict or low-income countries around the world. Our programs reduce and address the consequences of disabling accidents and disease; clear landmines and prevent mine related accidents through education; respond fast and effectively to natural and civil disasters in order to limit serious and permanent injuries and assist survivors with social and economic reintegration; and advocate for the universal recognition of the rights of the disabled through national planning and advocacy. Handicap International is a co-founder of the Cluster Munition Coalition and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, which was awarded the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize.