



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Historic step forward for treaty to ban cluster bombs**

### **After week of tough talks, Australia agrees to move forward**

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After a week of tough diplomatic talks, the voice of survivors and committed states has prevailed and a draft treaty to ban cluster munitions has been endorsed for formal negotiation.

The so called "Wellington Declaration" provides the draft treaty text to be negotiated and agreed in Dublin in May 2008 to ban cluster munitions, assist survivors and ensure clearance of their land.

More than 500 representatives from 100 governments as well as campaigners and survivors from around the world gathered in New Zealand for the penultimate meeting of the Oslo Process.

After intense discussion, there was broad agreement on the text of articles about victim assistance, clearance of areas contaminated by cluster munitions and the destruction of stockpiles. Earlier proposals by a group of countries to dilute the draft treaty were unsuccessful, but will be considered again during negotiations in Dublin. At the end of the week, the strong text of the treaty remains unchanged.

"We're pleased that Australia has endorsed the Wellington Declaration and we'll be going to Dublin in May to negotiate a ban on cluster munitions that cause unacceptable suffering to civilians," says Austcare's Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Archie Law.

The most contentious issues revolved around exemptions to the ban for some types of cluster munitions, transition periods in which cluster munitions could still be used after being banned, and the use of cluster munitions in joint military operations by states that are not part of the future treaty. The responsibility of countries which have used cluster munitions in the past to help clear them up was also an issue.

"We still have concerns with the SMARt 155 cluster munition that Australia has just bought and strongly believe that Australia should not assist any state to use cluster munitions in any joint military operations," says Mr. Law.

During the course of the week the developing world put up a strong stand in favour of a comprehensive ban.

States such as Laos, Lebanon, Indonesia and Nigeria called for the strongest possible treaty with no exception or exemptions for 'technical fixes' which they claim they will never be able to afford.

"I lost my eye and my life was devastated when my uncle and brother were killed by a cluster bomb attack, we urgently need a treaty to ban these deadly weapons and to help survivors rebuild their lives", said Umarbek Pulodov, a survivor from Tajikistan.

With the diplomats heading home it is now up to the people of Australia to put pressure on the new government to go to Dublin and support the strongest possible treaty, says Cluster Munition Coalition of Australia (CMCA) Coordinator, James Turton. "Write to the parliamentarians, write to the Minister of Defence, write to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and spread the word".

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