



## MEDIA RELEASE

### Australians call for comprehensive ban on cluster bombs

(*Dublin, Ireland, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008*) Humanitarian organisations and cluster bomb survivors from around the world are calling on the Australian Government to support the most significant disarmament treaty in more than a decade.

The call comes as more than 100 governments begin two weeks of negotiations in Dublin, to finalise a new international treaty to ban cluster bombs.

*"We are confident that governments will make the right decision and adopt a ban with no exceptions, no loopholes and no delays. Australia has a rare opportunity to lead world efforts to create a strong treaty that will prevent more victims,"* said Coordinator of the Cluster Munition Coalition of Australia, James Turton.

Cluster munitions are weapons that open in mid-air and randomly scatter often hundreds of individual submunitions (or "bomblets") over a large area. Countries are working to ban them because of the number of innocent men, women and children they kill and injure.

The draft treaty prohibits the use, production, and trade of cluster munitions, and establishes a deadline for the destruction of all existing stocks of the weapon. But it also goes far beyond the ban by requiring the clearance of contaminated areas, as well as specific legal obligations for states to ensure survivors and their communities are supported and cared for.

Branislav Kapetanovic, a former deminer and cluster bomb survivor from Serbia, who lost both his arms and legs said, *"These deadly weapons destroy lives and communities for years after use. The treaty obliges states to provide badly needed humanitarian assistance so that survivors like me can live with dignity."*

*"Governments have been talking about the dangers of cluster bombs for years. More delays mean more injuries and death for ordinary people. We have a unique opportunity to ban cluster bombs in Dublin - it is now or never,"* said Grethe Østern of Norwegian People's Aid and co-chair of the Cluster Munition Coalition.

The negotiating countries include most of the world's users, producers and stockpilers of cluster munitions.

There are concerns that Australia has aligned itself with a group of countries that could attempt to weaken a provision in the treaty that prohibits States Parties from assisting with the use of cluster munitions by others during joint military operations.

The negotiations begin in Dublin today (MON – Ireland time) and are scheduled to conclude on Friday, May 30, when the participating states will adopt the final text of the treaty.

As part of the opening ceremony more than 700 thousand signatures from petitions around the world will be presented, including more than 3000 from Australia alone.

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