



Press Release

For Immediate Release
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**Convention on Cluster Munitions Celebrates Second Anniversary:
Campaigners Call on U.S. to Attend Upcoming Treaty Meeting**

Washington, D.C.— Today marks the second anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. In recognition of the day, campaigners in the United States have written to U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to urge that the United States participate as an observer at the upcoming Third Meeting of States Parties to the Convention which will take place in Oslo, Norway, from September 11-14, 2012.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions comprehensively bans the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions and places obligations on countries to clear affected areas, assist victims and destroy stockpiles. To date, 111 states have joined the treaty, including most of the U.S.'s closest allies.

“While only two years old, the treaty banning cluster bombs is already creating a powerful effect in stigmatizing the weapon, so that even those countries like the United States that have not yet joined will not be able to use cluster bombs without facing widespread international condemnation,” said Zach Hudson, coordinator of the U.S. Campaign to Ban Cluster Bombs.

At the Third Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Oslo in September, States Parties will give updates on progress in universalizing and implementing the treaty. States that have not yet joined will also be present to give updates on their policies and actions on cluster munitions.

“The participation of the United States as an observer at the conference would demonstrate U.S. commitment to the elimination of civilian casualties caused by cluster munitions, as well as to clearance efforts and the assistance of victims,” said Hudson. “As the world’s leader in funding for clearance activities, the U.S. can also use this forum as an opportunity to foster ongoing dialogue with states and nongovernmental organizations committed to continued clearance and victim assistance.”

On July 11, Secretary Clinton visited the Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise (COPE) Center in Vientiane, Lao PDR, to observe medical and rehabilitation services for amputees—many of whom are victims of cluster munitions left over from the Vietnam War. During her visit, she met with Phongsavath Souliyalat, who lost both his hands and his eyesight while walking home from school on his 16th birthday when a friend handed him a cluster bomb, one of the millions of unexploded cluster submunitions left in Laos as a result of the legacy of the U.S. bombing campaign.

At the meeting, Secretary Clinton said, “We have to do more. That’s one of the reasons I wanted to come here today, so that we can tell more people about the work that we should be doing together.” In the visitors’ book, Secretary Clinton also pledged that the United States would support the Lao people and government to overcome the legacies of the past.

“U.S. attendance at the conference would help to fulfill that promise—to Lao PDR and to the many other nations impacted by these weapons,” said Channapha Khamvongsa, executive director of Legacies of War. “By engaging with the world community to address the consequences of cluster

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munitions, the United States can participate in the conversation and work towards the elimination of this indiscriminate weapon that, as seen from the legacies of Lao PDR, disproportionately takes the lives and affects the livelihoods of countless innocent men, women, and children long after conflict is over.”

Cluster munitions were used extensively in Southeast Asia by the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, and continue to take victims to this day. The Lao National Regulatory Authority estimates that up to 30% of the 270 million cluster munitions dropped on Laos failed to detonate, and over 20,000 people have been killed or maimed by UXO since the end of the conflict. The United States—on its own and through NATO—also dropped millions of cluster submunitions collectively in Kosovo and Yugoslavia in 1999, in Afghanistan in 2001- 2002, and during the first three weeks of combat in Iraq in 2003.

The United States said in a November 25, 2011, statement that the U.S. would continue to implement the Defense Department policy on cluster munitions issued June 19, 2008, which mandates that cluster munitions used after 2018 must leave less than 1% of unexploded “dud” submunitions on the battlefield

The statement came in the wake of the failure of a U.S.-led effort to get agreement on a new protocol to the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) that would have banned or regulated the use of some cluster munitions, but would have allowed unrestricted use of many millions of cluster munitions known to cause unacceptable harm to civilians. In its letter to Secretary Clinton, the U.S. Campaign urged the U.S. government to re-assess its cluster munition policy following the inability of the CCW to produce a result.

“The U.S. has already agreed to ban nearly all of its cluster munitions in 2018. It should accelerate the timetable and ban all cluster munitions now by joining the Convention on Cluster Munitions,” said Hudson.

For more information, visit www.uscbl.org.

-30-

CONTACTS:

Zach Hudson, Coordinator, USCBL

Phone: +1 (917) 860-1883

E-mail: zhudson@handicap-international.us

Alicia Pierro, Outreach & Advocacy Officer, USCBL

Phone: +1 (347) 623-2779

E-mail: apierro@handicap-international.us

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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 Cluster Munitions Coalition (CMC)— an international coalition with more than 350 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in around 100 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 universalization and full implementation of the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions. Cluster bombs (cluster munitions) are large weapons which are deployed from the air by aircraft including fighters, bombers and helicopters. These bombs open in mid-air and release dozens or hundreds of smaller submunitions.