

30 National Groups Urge Your Support for the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Cluster Munitions Civilian Protection Act

June 24, 2008

Dear Senator,

Momentum is building to outlaw cluster munitions. Last month 111 countries meeting in Dublin adopted a new Convention on Cluster Munitions, recognizing that these weapons are not essential for the world's military forces and that they wreak a terrible human toll even after fighting stops.

That treaty will open for signature on December 3, but the Bush administration has indicated that it does not support the convention. **We urge you to support Senate Joint Resolution 37, which calls upon the United States to sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and to cosponsor the Cluster Munitions Civilian Protection Act of 2007 (S. 594).**

Cluster munitions are bombs, rockets, and artillery shells that disperse smaller submunitions over broad areas. Their humanitarian impact is clear. Designed to attack large vehicle and troop formations, and not for the insurgent-based conflicts we see today, cluster munitions are indiscriminant weapons. Many of their submunitions fail to explode initially, posing potentially lethal risks to anyone that might later disturb them, including children attracted to what can look like shiny toys.

The United States has more than 700 million submunitions in its stockpile, the vast majority of which are aging and do not meet Department of Defense purchasing standards adopted in 2001 that require submunitions to have a 99 percent or higher functioning rate. Also, for the current fiscal year the United States is barred by law from exporting its cluster munitions that do not meet that reliability level.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions prohibits the use, production and transfer of cluster munitions. It requires the destruction of all stockpiled cluster munitions within 8 years. There is an exclusion for weapons with a small number of submunitions that have specific characteristics, such as point target acquisition and self-destruct and self-deactivating mechanisms, so that they do not have the indiscriminant wide area effect of cluster munitions or leave behind excessive unexploded ordnance.

The accord also requires the clearance of unexploded cluster submunitions and includes measures for international assistance to victims of these weapons. The United States is already a global leader in assistance for clearance and for victims of explosive remnants of war, of which cluster munitions are one type, and would strengthen its record by signing the accord.

If the United States refuses to join the treaty, it will find itself on the wrong side of an emerging humanitarian consensus. Even close military allies, such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and other NATO members, have pledged to sign the treaty and begin the destruction of their stockpiles.

Members of Congress do not need to wait for Presidential action on cluster munitions.

We urge you to cosponsor the Cluster Munitions Civilian Protection Act of 2007. Introduced last year in the Senate (S. 594) and House of Representatives (H.R. 1755), the act limits the use, sale, and transfer of cluster munitions that do not meet a 99 percent or higher functioning rate. It also requires that the weapons be used only against clearly defined military targets and not in areas normally inhabited by civilians, or where civilians are known to be present.

We respectfully encourage you to cosponsor the measure to limit weapons, the use of which by the United States and other countries has been responsible for the death or injury of tens of thousands of civilians across the globe.

Sincerely,

Kareem Shora
National Executive Director
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination
Committee (ADC)

Mary Ellen McNish
General Secretary
American Friends Service Committee

George Cody, Ph.D.
Executive Director
American Task Force for Lebanon

Daryl G. Kimball
Executive Director
Arms Control Association

Paul Ingram
Executive Director
British American Security Information
Council (BASIC)

Sarah Holewinski
Executive Director Campaign for Innocent
Victims in Conflict (CIVIC)

Patricia Burkhardt
Legislative Officer
Church Women United

The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori
Presiding Bishop
The Episcopal Church

Andrew D. Genszler
Director for Advocacy
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Joe Volk
Executive Secretary
Friends Committee on National Legislation

Paul F. Walker, Ph.D.
Legacy Program Director
Global Green USA

Wendy Batson
Executive Director
Handicap International

Steve Goose
Executive Director, Arms Division
Human Rights Watch

Rev. Kenneth Gavin, S.J.
National Director
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA

Robert Naiman
National Coordinator
Just Foreign Policy

Marie Dennis
Director
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Arli Klassen
Executive Director
Mennonite Central Committee

Rolando L. Santiago
Executive Director
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

William D. Hartung
Director, Arms and Security Initiative
New America Foundation

Krista Riddley
Director of Humanitarian Policy
Oxfam America

David A. Robinson
Executive Director
Pax Christi USA: National Catholic Peace
Movement

Kevin Martin
Executive Director
Peace Action

Jon Rainwater
Executive Director
Peace Action West

A. Frank Donaghue
Chief Executive Officer
Physicians for Human Rights

Sara Pottschmidt Lisherness
Director
Compassion, Peace, and Justice Ministry
Presbyterian Church, (USA)

David T. Ives
Executive Director
Albert Schweitzer Institute

Ken Rutherford, Co-Founder
Jerry White, Co-Founder and Executive
Director
Survivor Corps

James E. Winkler
General Secretary, General Board of Church
and Society
United Methodist Church

Ambassador William Luers
President
United Nations Association of the USA

Josh Ruebner
National Advocacy Director
U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli
Occupation

Martin Rendón
Vice President, Office of Public Policy and
Advocacy
U.S. Fund for UNICEF

Susan Shaer
Executive Director
Women's Action for New Directions

Please address replies to: Jeff Abramson, Arms Control Association, 1313 L Street, NW, Suite 130, Washington, DC, 20005.