

## **The Second Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions Beirut, 13-16 September 2011**

**IPB report, 20 September 2011, by Henrietta Wilkins**

The Second Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions took place in Beirut from 13-16 September 2011. Lebanon was chosen to host the meeting because it is a country with has direct experience of the devastating impact of these weapons. It was especially affected after the 2006 war during which, according to UN estimates, Israel fired around four million cluster bombs into South Lebanon, at least one million of which failed to detonate<sup>1</sup>. This placed resident populations at risk from death or injury, affected economic growth, restricted agricultural production and hindered post war reconstruction efforts.

Cluster munitions are weapons that are launched by aircraft, artillery or missiles and which contain submunitions or 'bomblets' which, when fired, are scattered over a wide area often away from their intended target<sup>2</sup>. Many of these submunitions fail to explode on impact and are left to maim or kill civilians long after the fighting has ended, especially children who are attracted to them by their colour and shape<sup>3</sup>. Despite having only been used in a few conflicts, they have injured and killed tens of thousands of civilians<sup>4</sup>.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions is a legally binding treaty that was adopted in May 2008<sup>5</sup> and entered into force on 1 August 2010 and which bans the use, development, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions<sup>6</sup>. It also requires countries to destroy any stockpiles they have of these weapons and any unexploded submunitions that are left on their territory and for other countries to help them do so. Furthermore, it contains provisions to ensure victims, which includes individuals, their families and the local and wider community, receive appropriate assistance in the form of medical care, rehabilitation and psychological support<sup>7</sup>.

By 8 September 2011, 109 countries had joined the Convention, 62 of which are already State Parties with the other 47 having signed but not yet having ratified it<sup>8</sup>. Important countries which have not yet joined the Convention include the US, China, India, Israel, Brazil and Russia.

Before the Second Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions took place the Cluster Munitions Coalition (CMC) asked governments to come to the Convention with 'clear plans and timelines' showing how they were going to implement the 66-point plan agreed on at the First Meeting of

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<sup>1</sup> MAG, [www.maginternational.org](http://www.maginternational.org)

<sup>2</sup> ICRC, (September 2008) 'Cluster munitions: a new treaty to end decades of civilian suffering', p.4

<sup>3</sup> ICRC, (September 2008) 'Cluster munitions: a new treaty to end decades of civilian suffering' p. 6

<sup>4</sup> ICRC, (September 2008) 'Cluster munitions: a new treaty to end decades of civilian suffering' p.3 & 6

<sup>5</sup> ICRC, (September 2008) 'Cluster munitions: a new treaty to end decades of civilian suffering', p.8

<sup>6</sup> The Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC), 'Governments Banning Cluster Bombs To Meet in Heavily-Affected Lebanon' (6 September 2011)

<sup>7</sup> ICRC, (September 2008) 'Cluster munitions: a new treaty to end decades of civilian suffering', p.8

<sup>8</sup> The Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC), 'Who's joined the Convention on Cluster Munitions' (8 September 2011).

State Parties held in Lao PDR 9-12 November 2010<sup>9</sup>. This included details of how they planned to destroy cluster munitions stockpiles, clear the remnants of cluster munitions, help survivors, help affected countries and help other states carry out these activities. They were also asked to discuss related issues such as how to ban investment in companies producing cluster munitions and how to prohibit the transit and foreign stockpiling of cluster munitions<sup>10</sup>.

Representatives from more than 120 governments attended the meeting as well as hundreds of campaigners, deminers and field operators from all over the world<sup>11</sup>. During the meeting state delegations spoke about the need to ensure cooperation and assistance by building strong partnerships between donor states and affected states and by linking mine action to development. The recent use of cluster munitions in 2011 was condemned, and CMC called for adherence to the Convention as the only way to end the suffering caused by cluster munitions.

During the meeting States announced the progress they had made in fulfilling the obligations of the Convention, most importantly:

- a) Swaziland's announced its accession to the Convention, making it the 63rd State Party;
- b) Italy, Hungary, Gambia, Cameroon, Mauritania, Czech Republic, and South Africa confirmed that the steps they are taking to ratify the Convention should soon be complete;
- c) Delegates from Malaysia, Gabon, Kiribati, Tajikistan and newly independent South Sudan indicated that they planned to accede to the Convention;
- d) Slovenia confirmed that it had completed destroying its stockpile and the UK and Germany announced that they have each destroyed more than 60 percent of their stockpiles;
- e) The UK announced that it would exceed its £30 million commitment to funding clearing cluster munitions between 2010-2013, and Germany stated that it would provide €700,000 to help clear Lebanon in 2012;
- f) States Parties contaminated by cluster munitions, with the exception of Lao PDR, announced that they should finish clearance operations before the treaty's 10-year deadline;
- g) States pledged to expand their victim assistance programs and CMC cluster munition survivors issued a Victim's Declaration calling on governments to "move beyond words and take action<sup>12</sup>."

Several documents were adopted by the plenary most notably: the *Beirut Declaration*, which recognised the important gains that had already been made by the Convention, and which condemned any use of cluster munitions. It states:

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<sup>9</sup> The Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC), 'Governments Banning Cluster Bombs To Meet in Heavily-Affected Lebanon' (6 September 2011)

<sup>10</sup> The Cluster Munition Coalition, 'Join the team for a world without cluster bombs: Questions and Answers on the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Second Meeting of States Parties' (pgs 4-5)

<sup>11</sup> UPI, 19 September 2011, 'Without US, cluster bomb ban gains', [http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/Special/2011/09/19/Without-US-cluster-bomb-ban-gains/UPI-69541316449022/?spt=hs&or=tn](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2011/09/19/Without-US-cluster-bomb-ban-gains/UPI-69541316449022/?spt=hs&or=tn) (accessed 20 September 2011)

<sup>12</sup> CMC (16 September 2011), 'Global Conference on cluster bomb ban ends with even more states pledging to join the treaty', <http://www.stopclustermunitions.org/news/?id=3431> (accessed 20 September 2011).

'We acknowledge that the progress made since the First Meeting of States Parties and throughout the Oslo Process is the result of the successful partnership between States, international organizations and civil society,' and that: 'Together, we are compelled to do more, for as long as people remain at risk, to accomplish our collective goal – a world free of cluster munitions<sup>13</sup>.'

The meeting was widely seen as a great success and Steve Goose, Chair of the CMC, said: 'This meeting has made abundantly clear that this treaty is working. It is already making a real difference in alleviating the suffering caused by cluster munitions, and is preventing future harm<sup>14</sup>.'

**The Third Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions will take place in Oslo from 10-14 September 2012, and the next intersessional meetings will be held in Geneva from 16-19 April 2012.**

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<sup>13</sup> This and other documents relating to the meeting can be accessed at [www.clusterconvention.org/documents/2msp-documents/](http://www.clusterconvention.org/documents/2msp-documents/)

<sup>14</sup> CMC (16 September 2011), 'Global Conference on cluster bomb ban ends with even more states pledging to join the treaty', <http://www.stopclustermunitions.org/news/?id=3431> (accessed 20 September 2011).