

# Governments should end suffering caused by landmines and cluster bombs, bolster disability rights

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

## *Support three key treaties on International Day of Persons with Disabilities*

(Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, 2 December 2009) - High-level representatives from 130 countries attending the Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World should redouble efforts to rid the world of antipersonnel landmines and cluster bombs, as well as pledge their support to assisting victims and upholding disability rights, a global group of disarmament, humanitarian and human rights organisations said today, marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December.

More than 1,000 delegates are gathered in Cartagena to take stock of the progress made on the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty, as well as to promote the entry into force of the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions, which includes groundbreaking provisions on assistance to victims and affected communities. The global movements to ban landmines and cluster bombs, under the banners of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) and the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC), urged delegates to work toward universalisation of both treaties and to agree on a strong Cartagena Action Plan that prioritises assistance to those affected. Survivors from all regions of the world urged governments to consider the human toll of these weapons, and to support the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

"Today we celebrate three global treaties designed to end suffering and injustice while improving lives and livelihoods in communities worldwide," said Dr. Ken Rutherford, a landmine survivor and co-founder of Survivor Corps, which has played a leading role in the campaigns to ban antipersonnel landmines and cluster bombs, as well as in the negotiations for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. "Each treaty has its own specific focus, but they are strongly linked in terms of implementation, in particular on victim assistance, which must be about human rights."

The Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World is the name given to the second review conference of the Mine Ban Treaty, which was signed on 3 December 1997 and entered into force 10 years ago. The Treaty seeks to eradicate the use of antipersonnel mines and to end the suffering they cause. To date, 156 states are party to the Treaty, which requires that they never use landmines again and provide assistance to landmine survivors.

"On its 12th anniversary, the Mine Ban Treaty stands as a beacon of what is possible in humanitarian affairs - it has achieved unprecedented concrete results on the ground, as well as setting a model for civil society engagement in international affairs that continues to influence others and is still going strong today," said Sylvie Brigot, Executive Director of the ICBL. "But translating words on paper into results in communities is the measure of success: key challenges remain and implementation of the three treaties must be stepped up with governments, campaigners and international organisations staying engaged for the long haul. That's the lesson from 10 years of successful work on the Treaty."

The collaborative process that led to the adoption of the Mine Ban Treaty, as well as its text and structure, served as the basis for the successful adoption and signature of the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions, which marks the first anniversary of its signing in Oslo on 3 December.

"The first anniversary of the Convention on Cluster Munitions comes amid remarkable progress. We've had nine new signatures since Oslo, 24 ratifications already, entry into force is set to happen in the middle of next year and plans are well under way for Lao PDR to host the First Meeting of States Parties towards the end of the year," said Thomas Nash, Coordinator of the Cluster Munition Coalition. "The Cartagena Summit should serve as a stark reminder of the civilian harm caused by cluster munitions, landmines and other explosive weapons,

and spur governments to give their full support to universal implementation of all three treaties. In particular, states that have already joined the Mine Ban Treaty should now put their full support behind the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which shares the same humanitarian purpose."

Participants at the summit in Colombia include heads of states and governments, landmine and cluster bomb survivors, leaders from the successful global campaigns to ban landmines and cluster bombs, and the Colombian singer Juanes, whose foundation Mi Sangre has been outspoken on landmine and victim assistance issues. On 2 December, the CMC, the ICBL, Survivor Corps and Fundación ArcÁngeles hosted the "Rumble in Cartagena," a quad rugby event to highlight the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December, which also marks the first anniversary of the signing of the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions and the 12th anniversary of the signing of the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty.

The organisations welcomed the government of Albania's announcement at the Cartagena summit that it has completed clearance of all landmines and cluster munitions on its territory, and called on all states to move forward on implementation of the landmine and cluster munition ban treaties, including clearing land and providing assistance to survivors, their families and affected communities.

**Background on the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty**

Antipersonnel mines are munitions designed to explode from the presence, proximity, or contact of a person. Antivehicle mines are munitions designed to explode from the presence, proximity, or contact of a vehicle as opposed to a person. Landmines are victim-activated and indiscriminate; whoever triggers the mine, whether a child or a soldier, becomes its victim. Mines placed during a conflict against enemy forces can still kill or injure civilians decades later.

### **Background on the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty**

The Mine Ban Treaty entered into force on 1 March 1999. Since it opened for signature in December 1997 in Ottawa, 156 countries have ratified or acceded to the Convention, which has the following core aims:

- Universal acceptance of a ban on antipersonnel mines;
- Destruction of stockpiled antipersonnel mines;
- Clearance of mined areas; and
- Assistance to mine victims.

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) is a coalition of more than 1,000 organisations in over 70 countries, working locally, nationally, and internationally to eradicate antipersonnel mines. It received the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize, jointly with its founding coordinator Jody Williams, in recognition of its efforts to bring about the Mine Ban Treaty.

The First Review Conference was held in Nairobi, Kenya in 2004.

### **Background on the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions**

A cluster munition (or cluster bomb) is a weapon containing multiple - often hundreds - of small explosive submunitions or bomblets. Cluster munitions are dropped from the air or fired from the ground and designed to break open in mid-air, releasing the submunitions over an area that can be the size of several football fields. This means they cannot discriminate between civilians and soldiers. Many of the submunitions fail to explode on impact and remain a threat to lives and livelihoods for decades after a conflict.

Since the Convention on Cluster Munitions opened for signature in Oslo in December 2008, 103 countries have signed, of which 24 have ratified. The Convention will enter into force six months after the 30th ratification, and has the following core aims:

- Universal acceptance of a ban on the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions;
- Destruction of stockpiled cluster munitions within eight years;
- Clearance of affected areas within 10 years; and

- Assistance to victims and communities affected by cluster bomb use.

Lao PDR, the world's most cluster-bombed country, is set to host the First Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, which could take place toward the end of 2010.

The Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) is an international coalition of around 350 non-governmental organisations working in some 90 countries to encourage urgent action against cluster bombs. The membership includes organisations working on disarmament, peace and security, human rights, victim/survivor assistance, clearance, women's rights, faith issues and other areas of work. The CMC facilitates the efforts of NGOs worldwide to educate governments, the public and the media about the problems of cluster munitions and the solution through the global treaty banning the weapon.

A complete listing of ratifications and signatures of the Convention can be found at:  
<http://www.stopclustermunitions.org/treatystatus/>

For more information on the Cluster Munition Coalition, please visit [www.stopclustermunitions.org](http://www.stopclustermunitions.org)

Banning Cluster Munitions: Government Policy and Practice (May 2009 report):  
<http://lm.icbl.org/index.php/publications/display?url=cm/2009/>

**To view a trailer video for the "Rumble in Cartagena" international quad rugby match between Colombia and the US, please visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hYN8w1Oxt8I>**

## Interview opportunities

Campaigners, experts and survivors can provide interviews on landmines and cluster munitions in all geographical regions, on clearance, victim assistance, risk education, and stories of survival. Jody Williams, 1997 Nobel Peace Prize Co-Laureate and the leadership of the international campaigns to ban antipersonnel mines and cluster munitions will also be present.