

Iceland faces diplomatic embarrassment on cluster bomb ban

Government poised to miss deadline to introduce pledged cluster munition legislation, while use of weapon continues in Ukraine, Syria and suspected in Libya.

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, March 11, 2015 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [For immediate release]: Unless efforts are made in the coming days, Iceland will face embarrassment at a key international conference to be held in Dubrovnik in September, for failing to ratify the global ban on cluster munitions. This is despite having more than six years to ratify since signing the Convention on Cluster Munitions on 3 December 2008, and despite the need for action as use of the weapon continues in Syria and eastern Ukraine.

As news emerges of Iceland's failure to introduce the drafted ratification legislation, questions are being raised as to why Iceland is abandoning its promise to ratify before Dubrovnik. Officials have issued annual [assurances](#) that the legislation would be introduced in successive parliamentary sessions. The failure to ratify the treaty in previous years has been attributed to a lack of prioritisation.

Within the period that Iceland has failed to ratify the treaty:

- 23/25 European signatory states to the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions have ratified the treaty.
- 18 former producers of the weapon have renounced further production.
- Clearance of cluster munition contamination has been completed in 9 countries, and is progressing in the other affected countries.
- 24 countries have destroyed their stockpiles of cluster munitions; including the UK which destroyed a massive stockpile of 38.7 million submunitions five years ahead of its mandated deadline, and Denmark which destroyed its stockpile four years early. 80% of declared stockpiles of cluster munitions have now been destroyed by states parties.
- 8 cluster munition affected countries have reported progress to implement victim assistance programmes.

Yet collective effort is still needed. Use of cluster munitions has been recorded in eastern Ukraine and Syria within the past year, and remnants are still claiming lives in other countries affected by the weapon. The [New York Times](#) has also uncovered evidence of suspected recent use of cluster munitions in Libya in March 2015. The use and indiscriminate effects of this weapon have led to mounting casualties in Syria. Cluster Munition Monitor reports 1,584 Syrian casualties in 2012 and 2013 due to cluster munition strikes and remnants. Figures are not yet available for 2014 but use of the weapon continues to claim lives. 97% of those recorded killed in Syria were civilians. Human Rights Watch and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) have both uncovered evidence that Ukrainian government forces have used cluster munitions on at least two occasions: in October 2014 in Donetsk City and in January 2015 in Luhansk. On both occasions civilians have been killed and injured.

The obligations on Iceland as a state party to the treaty will be light due to its status as a country that does not produce or stockpile the weapon and that is not affected by cluster munitions. The impact of Iceland's ratification would be significant, helping to support the stigmatisation of the weapon against

further use, encouraging other states to join the treaty, and showing solidarity with cluster munition-affected countries.

Over 100 governments are expected to attend the First Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, in Dubrovnik 7-11 September 2015. It will be an occasion to reflect on the status and success of the historic treaty. The world will be watching Dubrovnik, to review which countries have prioritised efforts to ensure civilians can live free from the impact of this horrific weapon. Iceland can ensure that it is on the right side of the global ban by introducing the draft legislation within the current parliamentary sitting.

- Ends -

Notes to editors:

- A cluster munition is a weapon containing multiple – often hundreds- of small explosive submunitions. They are dropped from aircraft or fired from the ground and are designed to break open in mid-air, releasing the submunitions and saturating an area that can be the size of several football fields. Many of the submunitions fail to explode on impact and remain a threat to lives and livelihoods for decades after a conflict.
- The 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions comprehensively prohibits the use, production and transfer of cluster munitions as well as requiring clearance of cluster munition remnants, destruction of stockpiles, and assistance for victims. 116 countries have joined the convention, of which 89 are states parties: <http://www.clusterconvention.org/>
- The First Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions will be held in Dubrovnik, Croatia 7-11 September 2015: First Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, in Dubrovnik 7-11 September 2015: <http://bit.ly/1BqvAdK>
- To view information on Iceland's path to ratification of the Convention on Cluster Munitions visit: <http://bit.ly/1DPgv2G> . For Further information on cluster munition contamination, casualties, clearance and ban policy in every country in the world visit <http://www.the-monitor.org>
- 2014/15 use of cluster munitions in eastern Ukraine: Human Rights Watch (<http://bit.ly/1C1TE5A>): OSCE (<http://www.osce.org/ukraine-smm/138906>)
- Use of cluster munitions in Syria: <http://www.stopclustermunitions.org/syria>
- 10 March 2015 New York Times report on suspected use of cluster munitions in Libya: <http://nyti.ms/1AfC5ft>
- Norwegian People's Aid is a humanitarian organisation rooted in the Norwegian Labour Movement. We work with International Development Partnerships, Humanitarian Mine Action, Rescue Service and First Aid, and Asylum and Integration. Norwegian People's Aid has more than 12000 members in Norway and 2400 staff worldwide. We work in 39 countries around the world. <http://www.npaid.org/>
- Norwegian People's Aid is a member of the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC). The CMC is an international coalition of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working in around 100 countries to eradicate cluster munitions, prevent further casualties from these weapons and put an end for all time to the suffering they cause. <http://www.stopclustermunitions.org>

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