Cluster munitions
Cluster Munition Coalition

Background
Cluster munitions have a devastating impact on civilians, both at the time of use and long afterwards. Their wide area footprint causes massive harm when deployed, with no way of distinguishing between civilian and military targets. Often a significant number of cluster submunitions fail to explode when deployed, which mean unexploded submunitions remain on the ground and threaten lives long after a conflict has ended. They have killed and injured thousands of civilians over the past decades, and their presence over large areas of fertile land or urban areas poses a threat to the safety and livelihood of communities over the long term.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions was adopted in 2008 as a comprehensive solution to this problem. It bans the use, production, stockpiling, and transfer of cluster munitions; requires destruction of stockpiled cluster munitions within eight years and clearance of contaminated land within ten years; protects the rights of victims of these weapons; and entitles affected states to international assistance to meet their legal obligations.

Current context
The Convention’s wide membership and even wider support from the international community has created a powerful stigma against cluster munitions. Use of the weapon has only occurred in a few states in recent years, mainly in Syria, but there have also been reported instances of use in South Sudan and Ukraine. Some 97% of people killed in Syria by cluster munitions in 2013 were civilians. International reaction to use in recent years has been strong, including 151 states that have condemned use of cluster munitions in the context of ongoing use in Syria.

As there remain considerable stockpiles of cluster munitions around the world, the Convention is largely aimed at preventing future use, but it also seeks to redress the impact of past use. It is already making clear progress towards these goals. Today 113 countries have joined the Convention on Cluster Munitions, of which 84 are states parties. As a result of the Convention, states parties are already working hard to destroy
their stockpiles, clear their land, and assist cluster munition victims. Almost 140 million submunitions have already been destroyed by 22 states parties.

**Recommendations for governments**

*During First Committee:*

- All delegations should condemn any use of cluster munitions, including the widespread use by Syria.
- States parties to the Convention should emphasise that universalization of the Convention is essential to preventing any further harm from their use and report on their contribution to the implementation and universalization of the Convention.
- States outside the Convention should report on progress made towards joining and may want to stress their support for the humanitarian objectives of the Convention, as many of them do each year.

*Beyond First Committee:*

- All states must halt their use of cluster munitions, anywhere.
- All states should join the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

- States parties to the Convention must increase their efforts to comply with all obligations, especially to clear their land, rapidly destroy their stocks, and provide assistance to cluster munition victims.
- All states should provide the necessary resources to achieve the Convention’s goals quickly.
- The First Review Conference of the Convention will take place in Dubrovnik (Croatia) in September 2015. All states are invited to take part in the event and to get ready to report on the successful implementation of the 2010-2015 Vientiane Action Plan. States not party are encouraged to use technical and legal support from the ICRC, UN Agencies and Cluster Munition Coalition to adhere to the Convention before this landmark Conference.