

## Kia Kaha – Be Strong! Subscribe to the Declaration

Now is the time! We urge all delegations to subscribe to the Wellington Declaration today and forward the current “Draft Cluster Munitions Convention” text to Dublin for negotiations.

If your country intends to support the Dublin negotiations, subscribe to the unequivocal and comprehensive treaty objective contained in the Wellington Declaration. We need, as Ambassador Don Mackay said yesterday, “as many as possible to subscribe in Wellington to help keep the momentum going strong.”

Seize the opportunity to bring us one more crucial step closer to delivering on the promise of the Oslo Process. Then travel safely home to your countries and ensure your government comes to Dublin wholeheartedly supporting a strong and comprehensive cluster munitions convention.

The opportunity to make a difference in one’s career or even lifetime seldom or rarely ever appears. The Wellington Conference provides a courageous mechanism to make a real difference in this all too often violent world. Each and every one of you has the possibility to play a crucial role over the next three months in ensuring that your government comes to Dublin to negotiate a strong Convention banning cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians—one without exceptions, without reservations, without loopholes, and without delays.

The “Oslo Process on Cluster Munitions” was launched one year ago today in Oslo and 46 countries endorsed the Oslo Declaration pledging to con-

clude a legally binding international instrument prohibiting cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians in 2008. Now with more than 100 countries on board, the Oslo Process series of international meetings in Lima and Vienna and regional meetings in Belgium, Cambodia, Costa Rica, and Serbia, the Oslo Process has gathered momentum at an unstoppable pace.

Heed the pleas of the five cluster munition survivors this week, including Sladjan Vučković on Tuesday, when he said, “As a professional [clearance operator] I have the responsibility, and as a survivor I have the right and, therefore, the obligation on my behalf and on the behalf of my family and all victims of cluster munitions to ask you to endorse Wellington Declaration.”

Sladjan lost both arms and a leg at the age of 33, while working on the disposal of cluster submunitions in Serbia. He la-

mented no longer being able to play, walk with his two children, or dance with his wife, who also gave a moving account of how the tragedy affected their family.

“How can a cluster munition be safe?” said Sladjan. “Personal experience in clearance of areas contaminated by cluster munitions tells me that there are no and can be no safe cluster munitions, that will recognise and make a distinction between the person they will kill, maim or spare. ... All, literally all, cluster munitions are killers and that is their definition.”

“Plus jamais” – We must ensure that no more harm, no more suffering and no more devastation in the future is caused to innocent civilian populations.

We must succeed in Dublin to deliver the most significant disarmament and humanitarian treaty in over a decade.

—Susan B. Walker, ICBL



Ny Nhar, of the Jesuit Refugee Service (Cambodia), expresses his desire for a strong treaty outside of Wellington Town Hall on Thursday.



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### Quick Facts on the Oslo Process

- 46 countries endorsed the Oslo Declaration on February 23, 2007
- 68 countries attended the Lima Conference on Cluster Munitions in May 2007
- 136 countries attended the Vienna Conference on Cluster munitions in December 2007
- In one year’s time, the number of countries taking part in Oslo Process meetings has almost tripled.

## A Peace, Not “War” Photographer

Last night conference delegates and members of the public attended a film screening, followed by a talk by photographer John Rodsted. I had the chance to sit with John before the film to discuss the use of media to achieve advocacy objectives.

John Rodsted was the official photographer of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) during the historic Ottawa Process, which resulted in the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty. He has documented the devastating impacts of landmines, cluster munitions, and other unexploded ordnance in some of the most war torn regions on earth. His 2006 footage shot in South Lebanon startled and shocked diplomats into action when it was screened at the launch of the Oslo Process in February 2007.

For Rodsted, his job is about using media—film, photography, or audio—to show government decision-makers and others the

realities of what it's like on the ground. “It's about being a communicator; a visual link from the field to the politics. My world is the blood and guts world, so you've got to bring it to these guys and give them some empathy,” he says.

*Unacceptable Harm*, a film by fellow filmmaker Chris Anderson, is a powerful visual portrayal of the effects of cluster bombs on civilian communities around the world. Using footage from Laos, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Western Sahara, and Lebanon, the documentary allows survivors of these deadly weapons to tell their stories and it's nearly impossible to not empathize.

Watching the film, I couldn't get away from the *permanency* of their suffering. Whether a loved one was killed, whether they lost one or more limbs, whether they were forced to work at a young age because their parents couldn't, or whether they lived in constant

fear of stumbling upon an unexploded cluster munition, the damage that has been done to these people is irreparable. Rodsted sees this film as highlighting that the lives of those who use cluster bombs. It's a key lobbying resource.

While many filmmakers and photographers can be “precious” about sharing their work prior to completion and royalty checks, Rodsted has provided campaigners, media, and pro-ban governments with hours of footage and thousands of photos for little or no recompense.

Rodsted's commitment to getting rid of mines, clusters, and other explosive ordnance is relentless and infectious. He exudes an endless energy and will talk to *anyone* who will listen. Rodsted encourages others to prioritise media resources in their advocacy work and mentors novices such as Mary Wareham, who went on to make an award-winning

feature-length 2005 documentary film on landmines entitled *Disarm*.

Rodsted points out that film isn't the only multi-media resource available as an advocacy tool. “You've got to use all the tools at your disposal and be creative. You use mass media, such as newspapers and radio. And fringe media, YouTube, Facebook, blogs. You also be proactive and create public forums—public stunts, performances, and speeches. If you get a public presence there, then it's media.”

I expect we'll be seeing a lot more of John Rodsted and his work at the next conference in Dublin—watch this space.

—Fiona McAlister



Photographer John Rodsted speaks at Thursday's public film screening of *Unacceptable Harm*, a cluster munition documentary.



Soraj Ghulam Habib, a survivor from Afghanistan, protests outside of Town Hall this week.

## Campaigner Profile: Grethe Østern

Just as I thought I was gaining a little understanding of the roles of various people at this conference, Grethe Østern threw me a curve ball. On paper she's listed as both the cluster munitions policy advisor at Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) and co-chair of the Cluster Munition Coalition. However, in my interview with her she confided that she is, in fact, the "self-destruct person."

Now, before you start wondering about her superhuman abilities (and if self-destructing people could fit under Article 2 of the treaty), what she was trying to say is that she is most widely known for her work and knowledge on cluster munitions with self-destruct mechanisms, especially the Israeli-produced M85.

"This issue is really important because that's a main challenge to the treaty," she explains. "Self-destruct mechanisms have an improvement over other types of cluster munitions... but they are not a solution."

The report she spent many hours researching and writing—M85: An Analysis of Reliability—supports her claim. Released at the November 2007 Vienna Conference, it reviewed the use of cluster munitions during Israel's 2006 strikes on Lebanon and found self-destruct mechanisms to come up short.

"The producers and stockpilers of M85s have argued that their tests show that the failure rate for this bomblet type is only one or two percent, this new report proves that the failure rate for this bomblet in Lebanon was around ten percent," states the NPA website.



Grethe Østern, CMC co-chair and Norwegian People's Aid cluster munition policy advisor.

That word prove is the clincher. It's pretty hard to argue with statistics and Grethe is seeing countries fall under the weight of evidence. "That report has been very important in challenging countries positions," she said. "More countries are realising the weapon has to go." And for those still standing firm on the issue—namely Finland, France, Denmark, and the United Kingdom—she has a simple message: "We encourage them to bring up issues with the M85 report."

At this point I expected a sly smile to appear across Grethe's face. I get a sense of how hard it must be for diplomats to counter such compelling evidence. With three separate authors jointly contributing to the report, you have to answer not only to NPA, but also the stalwart Norwegian Defence Research Establishment and explosive ordnance disposal

expert Colin King with over twenty years experience. This is not the product of one "self-destruct" expert, but many.

With the Wellington Conference soon coming to a close, I was also interested in catching Grethe's opinion on her own government's involvement. I wondered how she felt about being a Norwegian native and watching the Oslo Process march towards its objective.

"It's really important that people understand that this is not an idea that the Norwegian government just had," she explains. "They'd been under pressure for many, many years in Norway to take responsibility on this issue. It was because of a lot of pressure from civil society that in the end they did. And I'm very proud of them for doing it."

Which in many respects proves the value of civil society—that we stand here today. "It is very important that we are a part of this process," Grethe says. "Most countries realise that."

—Elliot Taylor

### UPDATE:

**More than 1,000 members of the public came down to Civic Square on Wellington to show their support for the cluster bomb ban on Wednesday 20 February. Later that night at Parliament, the delegation of cluster bomb survivors handed over a total of 3,367 petitions to the Minister of Disarmament and Arms Control, Phil Goff. In the 24 hours since the hand-over another 1,500 petitions have been received by the coalition, a number that is expected to rise further.**

## CLUSTER BAN NEWS

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## Letter to the Editor

### Zambia Take the Lead!

Dear Editor,

This week the Zambian delegation announced its plan to hold a Cluster Munitions Conference in Livingstone from 31 March–1 April 2008. This is a welcome announcement that should help build a common position in the African region. According to Sierra Leonean Ambassador Ibraheim Souri, “We are working on a draft treaty text that works and can deliver the goods.” More than twenty governments have registered to participate according to the coordinator of the Zambia Campaign to Ban Landmines, Robert Mtonga, Landmine Survivors Network (LSN) is committed to work with the CMC to bring African war disabled survivors and campaigners to the Conference. As the Handicap International Ban Advocates have demonstrated in Wellington, the participation of survivors in cluster munitions conferences provides a key element of humanity to discussions. Mtonga believes that, “the process between Wellington and Dublin will be shaped not by diplomats but by the morality and voices of the victims.” –Ken Rutherford/Tracey Begley, Landmine Survivors Network

## Editorial

### Announcement

Dublin Diplomatic Conference

19-30 May 2008

Countries are now preparing to negotiate the proposed cluster munition treaty at the Croke Park Stadium in Dublin, Ireland from 19-30 May 2008. Irish nongovernmental organizations including Action from Ireland (Afri), Oxfam Ireland, Pax Christi, and others are preparing to host the civil society contingent to this important meeting. They are also lining up a series of public events to build Irish public support for a cluster bomb ban including a stunt on 19 April, the Global Day of Action to Ban Cluster Bombs, as well as a multi-media speaking tour around the country's major cities. According to Susan Hensel, the CMC's Dublin-based events and outreach coordinator, “We are preparing a series of creative and colourful events for the two weeks of the Dublin conference and invite campaigners from around the globe to make contributions to the program of events.” Susan can be contacted via email: [dublincmc@gmail.com](mailto:dublincmc@gmail.com).



Susan Hensel, CMC Dublin-based events and outreach coordinator

