

## Cluster Bomb Ban at Critical Crossroads

The global movement to tackle cluster bombs has come to a critical crossroads this week in New Zealand's harbour capital city of Wellington.

From Albania to Zambia, diplomatic representatives from more than 110 countries have travelled to the Wellington Town Hall this week to end the human suffering caused by these weapons. Even at this final stage of treaty preparations, new countries continue to join the ban community, including the Pacific states of Fiji, the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu.

The Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) delegation to the Conference is comprised of more than 150 participants from 38 countries and includes cluster bomb survivors, clearance experts, and activists with a diverse array of experience and expertise. A quarter of these delegates come from the Aotearoa New Zealand CMC, which is hosting civil society events throughout the week in support of the Conference.

The depth and breadth of participants to the Wellington Conference demonstrates the unstoppable momentum behind the "Oslo Process," which will culminate with the negotiation and adoption of the treaty banning cluster munitions in Dublin in May 2008.

Diplomats attending the Wellington Conference will discuss the draft treaty text as well as a declaration that will be issued by the Conference.

They face a clear choice. Either send a strong treaty text, one that will make a difference by saving lives, to the Dublin negotiations. Or shy away from this humanitarian imperative and let slip the most important opportunity in a decade to enhance the protection of civilians during and after conflict. The CMC believes that states should endorse the Wellington Declaration on the basis of the current draft treaty text.

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## A Clean, Green Meeting

At Sunday's orientation session to welcome civil society participants to Wellington, the coordinator of the Aotearoa New Zealand Cluster Munition Coalition, Mary Wareham from Oxfam NZ, described some of the measures that the campaign has taken to ensure the environmental impacts of this event are minimized.

According to Wareham, the Wellington Conference on Cluster Munitions is the largest disarmament meeting that the New Zealand government has ever convened with diplomatic representatives from more than 110 governments and approximately 160 civil society participants from 38 countries traveling to New Zealand. The green-

house gas emissions caused by this air travel are of concern - a roundtrip flight from the London to Wellington accounts for 7,754kg CO<sub>2</sub> and costs approximately USD\$200 or GBP£100 to offset.

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### Civil Society

#### Participation:

- 164 Registered Civil Society Participants
- 38 Countries Represented by Civil Society Participants
- New Campaigners from countries including Fiji, Papa New Guinea, Tonga, and Vanuatu.

## Cluster Bomb Ban at Critical Crossroads

*“This week is the most important week of the Oslo Process so far. We need to stand firm, work together, and meet our common objective. To all delegates we say: kia kaha, have strength.”*

*Thomas Nash,  
CMC Coordinator*

*“Haere Mai ki Aotearoa—Welcome to New Zealand.”  
Mary Wareham,  
Oxfam / CMC NZ*

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At the opening of the Conference, the CMC challenges governments to affirm the humanitarian promise of this process by rejecting efforts to weaken the treaty through the insertion of exceptions, delays, or loopholes into the draft text.

Several Oslo Process countries including France, Germany, Japan, and the United Kingdom have been exerting diplomatic pressure to weaken the draft treaty in three main ways: 1) by excluding certain weapons from the ban; 2) by accommodating “interoperability” concerns (the

possible use of cluster munitions in joint military operations by other countries that may not sign the treaty), and 3) by including a transition period when banned weapons could still be used.

To achieve a ban that makes a real difference, governments must reject the inclusion of a “transition period” in the treaty. Such a “phased approach” is utterly unacceptable to the CMC as it would undermine both the urgency and the purpose of the new treaty. It defies even the simplest of logic: how could one ban a weapon because it is unaccept-

able and then continue to use it? This is not the way to draft an instrument of international humanitarian law.

It is crucial that governments not weaken the draft agreement to suit certain countries that may not even sign it. The standard must be kept high to meet the humanitarian challenges posed by cluster munitions.

## A Clean, Green Meeting



CMC designed water bottles resembling BLU-97 submunitions for campaigners to use during the conference as a way to cut down on waste.

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The global Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) has agreed to make a financial contribution on behalf its staff and sponsored participants to “Manawa Karioi,” a 12-hectare ecological restoration project on the edge of the suburb of Island Bay in Wellington that aims to increase biodiversity in the area. This is not an officially-sanctioned carbon “off-setting” project, but rather a unique opportunity to make a sustainable contribution to a local community development initiative.

Civil society participants have been booked into accommodation located within easy walking distance of the conference venue and are encouraged to use local public transportation.

Another environmental consideration is the amount of printed materials and other resources that will be disseminated over the course of the conference. The NZCMC has sought to reduce the amount of paper that it produces and dissemi-

nates by advertising its public events on the website and through email alerts, as well as by putting core documents on flash drives for civil society participants. The promotional banner is made from biodegradable materials and most publicity flyers are printed on recycled materials.

Where possible, the NZCMC has sought to support local businesses including accommodation, transportation, and restaurants. Support received locally includes donations from the (locally-owned) New World Metro supermarket, fresh fruit from Common Sense Organics, and fairtrade coffee and tea products from Trade Aid. Participants have been provided with special water bottles that can be reused and are encouraged to drink Wellington’s tap water, which is safe and tasty! Civil society participants have also been provided with canvas bags (as opposed to plastic ones) and the T-Shirts used to identify NZCMC volunteers have been sourced from a fairtrade provider.

# Campaigner Profile: Steve Goose

Steve Goose was quite busy yesterday. I suspect he is often quite busy. Ever since he arrived in the country on Friday morning, I've been hoping to catch up with him to talk about his work with Human Rights Watch, the Oslo Process, this conference and, of course, the sights and sounds of Wellington. Turns out the only opportunity I had to squeeze into his tight schedule was post a Sunday afternoon press conference as he rushed off to his next engagement—the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) Orientation session. With trusty Dictaphone in hand, I walked with him, asked him questions, and almost got him run over on a busy Wellington street. Anything for a good story.

Currently a co-chair of the CMC, Goose has also worked as the executive director of the Human Rights Watch (HRW) Arms Division since 1993 and on the issue of cluster munitions intensively since HRW first called for governments to take action in 1999. Having labelled cluster munitions “a humanitarian disaster waiting to happen”, there's no doubt he sees this week's conference as a crucial meeting in the process of banning the weapon.

“The key objective for this week is to get as many govern-

ments as possible to endorse the Wellington Declaration and to ensure the already strong draft treaty text is not weakened,” Goose explains. “The Wellington Declaration will commit governments to formally negotiate the treaty in Dublin in May on the basis of the text to emerge from this meeting.”

Exactly *what* that draft treaty text will say is the important part.

According to Goose, there are three controversial issues: possible exclusion to the prohibitions, a transition period, and, for those that like big words, “interoperability.” He's also put his stake in the ground on all three.

“The coalition has made its views very clear,” he says. “We find any kind of broad exception based on a technical fix unacceptable. You can't allow continued use of cluster munitions with self-destruct devices. An approach that allows use of cluster munitions based on a reliability rate would be unacceptable, because those rates are never achieved in real-world conditions.”

Similarly, Goose stands firm in his views on a transition period.



Steve Goose, executive director of the Human Rights Watch Arms Division and CMC co-chair

“I can't see how any government could, with a straight face, say, ‘We agree this weapon has to be banned on humanitarian grounds, but, by the way, we have to continue using it for ten years until we can build new weapons to replace them.’ Either you are responding to the humanitarian imperative or you're not.”

And, as for interoperability, when certain countries look out for the needs of their allies, Goose comments: “You're saying that you don't want your armed forces to use these weapons anymore because they cause excessive harm to civilians, but you're okay with your ally using them?”

“We're stigmatizing the weapon,” he goes on to say.

“The heart of our effort is to create a mindset where any use of cluster munitions is considered beyond the pale. You can't do that if you are contemplating things like transition periods or provisions in a treaty that would somehow facilitate the use by your allies that don't join the treaty.”

As for his thoughts on Wellington, well, we didn't quite get to that before he rushed into his next meeting. —Elliot Taylor



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*Cluster Ban News* is an update by the Aotearoa New Zealand Cluster Munition Coalition. We welcome comments or feedback, including letters to the editor. These can be provided to us at the NGO Secretariat or by email at [clusterbannews@gmail.com](mailto:clusterbannews@gmail.com).



Left to right: Rachel Good, Managing Editor; Mary Wareham, Editor in Chief; Fiona McAlister, Web Editor

