

Pacific Support for the Cluster Munition Ban

Cluster munitions used by the United States and others have killed and maimed civilians in thirty-one countries including Afghanistan, Iraq, Laos, and Serbia. In July and August 2006, Israel launched an estimated 4 million cluster submunitions on south [Lebanon](#) targeting many populated areas. Approximately one million of these explosive devices failed to detonate on impact and continue to threaten lives and render land inaccessible.

After years of diplomatic inaction, it was the civilian casualties in Lebanon that finally prompted governments to launch an all-out effort in February 2007 to create a new international treaty to ban cluster munitions. Over the next 12 months more than 100 states joined in this bold multilateral initiative dubbed the “Oslo Process,” including nine Pacific countries: Cook Islands, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu. All of these Pacific states except Tonga subscribed to the [Wellington](#) Declaration issued 22 February 2008 affirming their support for the negotiation of an instrument prohibiting cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians.

Six Pacific states participated in the negotiations held in Dublin, Ireland, that resulted in the successful adoption of the Convention on Cluster Munitions on 30 May 2008 (Cook Islands, Fiji, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, and Vanuatu). In addition to immediately prohibiting the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions, the agreement sets groundbreaking humanitarian obligations for victim assistance, clearance of contaminated land, and destruction of stockpiles. It is widely viewed as the most significant humanitarian and disarmament treaty in more than a decade. The new Convention will be opened for signature at a high-level ceremony in Oslo, Norway on 3 December 2008 (the international day for people with disabilities).

While no Pacific state is believed to possess cluster munitions, this is not a remote or unknown issue. Peacekeepers from Fiji and other Pacific nations have been killed and injured by cluster munitions, landmines and other explosive remnants of war while deployed abroad. Several atolls and islands across the Pacific still hold unexploded ordnance from World War Two. All but three Pacific states (FS Micronesia, Tonga, Tuvalu) have banned antipersonnel landmines by joining the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty.

For Pacific states, the new Convention on Cluster Munitions should entail few implementation requirements beyond simple legislation to enforce the prohibition domestically and a transparency report due after ratification. There is no expectation that small Pacific states participate in meetings of the new Convention (besides the signing ceremony!), but sponsorship is available to assist those interested.

The best way to respect the memory of those killed by this weapon in Lebanon and elsewhere is to stop cluster munitions from ever being used again. Every Pacific state wishing to prevent future casualties from the horrors of cluster munitions should sign Convention on Cluster Munitions this December and ratify without delay.

Prevent Civilian Casualties * Ban Cluster Munitions

- *Cook Islands, Fiji, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, and Vanuatu* need to publicly confirm their intent to sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions this December.
- *Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, and Tonga* participated in the Oslo Process, but it is not clear if they will sign the Convention. *Kiribati, FS Micronesia, Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu* did not participate in the Oslo Process, but can still sign the Convention.

Please urge these states to sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions on 3 December!

For more information go to: www.banclusterbombs.org.nz

This Fact Sheet was prepared by [Aotearoa New Zealand Cluster Munition Coalition](#), Disability Promotion & Advocacy Association (Vanuatu) & Pacific Concerns Resource Centre, August 2008