



ANZCMC Report on Activities

UNGA First Committee on Disarmament and International Security
New York
12-23 October 2009



Ambassador Dell Higginson, New Zealand's Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament, addresses a side event on the Mine Ban Treaty, 23 October 2009 © Mary Wareham

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About the Report

This is a report on activities by Mary Wareham of Human Rights Watch, coordinator of the Aotearoa New Zealand Cluster Munition Coalition, at the United Nations (UN) General Assembly First Committee on disarmament and international security in New York from 12-23 October 2009. Wareham joined a team of a dozen other representatives from both the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) and Cluster Munition Coalition to lobby government delegates on the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty and the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions respectively.

National Statements

Both the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions featured prominently in governments' statements to the UN First Committee, particularly during the debate in the third week on conventional weapons. Approximately 25 countries made particular reference to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, of which ten confirmed that steps are being taken to ratify the Convention. Lao PDR reiterated its offer to host the Convention's First Meeting of States Parties. Indonesia announced that it would host a regional conference in Bali in November to promote the Convention. Senegal, Slovenia, Thailand, Turkey, the UK and Zimbabwe provided technical updates on their implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty, including their challenges in meeting clearance and/or stockpile destruction obligations. China, Cuba, India, and Republic of Korea stated clear support for the humanitarian vision of the Mine Ban Treaty, but repeated the same tired arguments for not joining.

- View national [statements](#)

Annual Resolutions

An annual resolution on the implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty was tabled by Switzerland in its capacity as the President of last annual Meeting of States Parties together with Australia and Jordan. The resolution reaffirms the determination of governments to put to an end the suffering caused by anti-personnel mines and the need to ensure victim assistance. On 30 October 2009, a total of 158 states voted in support of the draft resolution, while nineteen abstained (including the US) and none voted against. Nineteen non-states parties voted in favor, one more than last year's final vote including Marshall Islands, FS Micronesia, and Tonga but not Tuvalu. In late November/early December, the full UNGA will vote on the final resolution. The Lao People's Democratic Republic and co-sponsor Ireland introduced a procedural UNGA resolution (A/C.1/64/L.16) on the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which should be agreed by consensus and not by a vote.

- First Committee vote on the Mine Ban Treaty resolution

Side Events

On Wednesday, 21 October, sixty governments attended a the UN Special Event on the Convention on Cluster Munitions, including representatives from 19 countries that have not yet signed the treaty: Bhutan, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, Greece, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Malaysia, Qatar,

Singapore, Suriname, Tajikistan, US, and Vanuatu. Speakers at the event included UN High Representative for Disarmament Sergio Duarte, the Lao ambassador to the United Nations, and representatives of the Cluster Munition Coalition, UNDP and the ICRC. Malawi and FYR Macedonia ratified the Convention most recently on 7 and 8 October respectively; their delegations made special announcements at the side event. On Friday, 23 October, Switzerland and the ICBL, in co-operation with Colombia and Norway held a side event on the Mine Ban Treaty attended by approximately two dozen government representatives. During the subsequent discussion, Egypt stated that due to “obvious reasons” it is not a state party; they lack resources to clear its landmines within the timeframe of the Mine Ban Treaty.

- [Report](#) and [photos](#) from the Mine Ban Treaty side event
- [Report](#) and [photos](#) from the Convention on Cluster Munitions side event

Lobby Visits

Civil society was very active throughout the week. Representatives of the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) and International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) met with diplomats from 50 missions. This included fourteen high-level meetings with the ambassador and/or deputy permanent representative. The meetings scheduled by ICBL sought to promote universalization of the Mine Ban Treaty with non-states parties, including voting in support of the annual UNGA resolution, while all encouraged participation in the Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World. The meetings scheduled by CMC sought to promote signature and ratification of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The meetings were particularly helpful in outreaching to Caribbean states and other small missions. As a direct result of the lobbying, Haiti signed the Convention on 28 October 2009 and others (Dominican Republic) are believed to be preparing to join. There were also useful discussions on how CMC can cooperate with treaty members to promote universalisation.

NGO Statements

CMC and ICBL representatives addressed the First Committee as part of a series of statements delivered to a room full of diplomats late on the afternoon of Friday, 23 October 2009. The CMC statement was delivered by Lynn Bradach, whose US marine son Travis was killed in 2003 by a cluster bomblet as he cleared explosive remnants of war in Iraq. Steve Goose of Human Rights Watch gave a strong statement urging all non-states parties to join the Mine Ban Treaty and participate in the Cartagena Summit.

- Statements by [ICBL](#) (Goose) and [CMC](#) (Bradach)
- [Photos](#) of the statements

Arms Trade Treaty

At the beginning of First Committee, the UK cut a dramatic deal with the US to win US support for a resolution launching negotiations of an Arms Trade Treaty in return for the US demand of a consensus-based negotiation. On 14 October, Hillary Clinton announced US support for the negotiation of the treaty and emphasized that: “consensus is needed to ensure the widest possible support” and “to avoid loopholes ... that can be exploited by those wishing to export arms irresponsibly.” Campaigners in New York (though

unfortunately not IANSA) expressed concern that consensus could give any state the right of veto over the adoption of a strong treaty. The National Rifle Association apparently launched a grassroots alert to notify its members that the United Nations is trying to regulate domestic gun controls in the US. UN member states continue to allow pro-gun lobbyists affiliated to the National Rifle Association access and the right to speak during the NGO statements alongside victims of gun violence.

On 30 October 2009, a total of 153 countries, including the US, voted in support of a draft UNGA resolution setting 2012 as the date for completion of the negotiation of an Arms Trade Treaty. Fifteen states abstained (Bahrain, Belarus, China, Cuba, Egypt, India, Iran, Kuwait, Libya, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, UAE, Venezuela, Yemen), while there was one vote against (Zimbabwe). In late November/early December, the full UNGA will vote on the final resolution.

- [Article](#) on the NRA action
- [Statement](#) by Clinton

Nuclear Disarmament

The US and Russia delivered dramatic back-to-back statements on 15 October 2009 that, according to Jim Wurst, showed the “vast differences that remain” in their efforts to dismantle or retire their nuclear weapons and agree to a new strategic arms agreement to replace START by the end of 2009. The [US](#) said negotiators are engaged in “intensive negotiations” on a treaty that “will enhance stability and predictability in our two countries’ strategic relationship while reducing deployed nuclear warheads.” An increasing number of states highlighted the mutually reinforcing relationship between nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, arguing for a balanced pursuit of both.

WILPF’s Reaching Critical Will project, which monitors government statements and actions at first committee, noted: “Disarmament cannot take a back seat to non-proliferation, nor can measures undertaken to prevent proliferation be considered acts of disarmament.” On behalf of the International Panel on Fissile Materials, Dr. Zia Mian of Princeton University gave a devastating critique of how the US under President Obama is committed to sustaining and modernizing its nuclear weapons complex as are other nuclear weapon powers. Mian said it is “not enough” to talk about wanting “to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons” and called on nuclear weapon states to “put up or shut up” on nuclear disarmament.

- Statements by [Zia Mian](#) and Ray Acheston of [WILPF](#)

Disarmament Machinery

On Friday, 23 October, the annual thematic debate on “disarmament machinery” provided (as always) a lively overview of the perilous state of UN-led disarmament initiatives and decision-making. [Norway’s](#) representative Hilde Hanne Skorpen led the charge for change, stating how, “In recent years we have regrettably witnessed that key multilateral bodies have struggled to live up to our expectations, or even worse, been completely paralysed.” If the Conference on Disarmament fails to deliver in 2010, she said, “we should ask ourselves whether this institution in its existing format serves our interests.”

Media Work

Both the CMC and ICBL issued press releases ahead of their side events, but there was little pick-up. On 22 October 2009, Human Rights Watch launched a campaign calling on the US to participate in the Cartagena Summit and join the Mine Ban Treaty. Supporters are urged to write Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

- [ICBL](#) and [CMC](#) press releases
- [HRW](#) press release and *US: Ban Landmines* [action](#)

New Zealand's Role

This was the “first” First Committee for New Zealand’s Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Dell Higgie, who replaced Don MacKay earlier this year. With the support of Raylene Liufalani, Higgie played an active and positive role at the First Committee, leading sponsorship together with Brazil of a resolution on a nuclear-weapon free southern hemisphere, supporting key resolutions on landmines and other weapons, and participating in side events. New Zealand joined Germany, Switzerland, and other states in expressing strong concern at the prospect of an Arms Trade Treaty negotiated by consensus, but New Zealand did not, however, use the explanation of vote option to express this view during the vote on the resolution. New Zealand gave a capable, but lackluster statement during the debate on nuclear weapons. Together with other sponsors of a de-alerting resolution issued in previous years, New Zealand decided not table the resolution in 2009 (according to Wurst, this was to avoid putting the US in a position of voting when a domestic policy review is underway).

- New Zealand’s statements on [nuclear](#) (14 Oct) and [conventional](#) (20 Oct) weapons

Thanks to Ray Acheson, Thomas Nash, Allison Pytlak, Jim Wurst, and [Reaching Critical Will](#) for their write-ups on the First Committee’s 2009 session!