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21 March 2007

Ban of cluster munitions

Motion for a resolution
presented by Mr Dupraz and others

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only the members who have signed it

1. Cluster munitions, due to their conception, do not allow to make the distinction between civilians and military objectives. Since the middle of the 20th century and in the most recent conflicts (Afghanistan, Kosovo, Iraq, Lebanon), the majority of victims killed and mutilated by these non-discriminatory weapons have been civilians. After the end of a conflict, the very numerous unexploded submunitions remain a permanent threat with unacceptable humanitarian and economic consequences.
2. Cluster munitions are conceived to neutralise area or military objectives by saturation. Scattered at random by their dropping, submunitions are, by nature, intended to cover very wide surfaces (up to several hundreds of hectares). The civilians who live in these zones can therefore be killed or mutilated during bombardments themselves.
3. Furthermore, between 5 and 40 % of submunitions do not explode on impact: lying on the ground, in trees or on the roof of houses, they constitute a threat comparable to antipersonnel mines. Unstable and very sensitive, they can be activated by the slightest contact (e.g. during agricultural works, clearing, reconstruction).
4. 98 % of the known victims of cluster munitions are civilians: men, women, children killed or mutilated during bombardments or when they try to resume their everyday life. Unexploded submunitions constitute a permanent danger for the children who go to school, the farmers and the villagers who try to earn a living and for their family. But the threat of these weapons does not stop there: the stocks of present cluster munitions in the arsenals of a growing number of countries are colossal. If they were massively used, they would provoke an unprecedented human disaster.
5. Not making a distinction between civil areas and military objectives, cluster munitions violate, by their nature, the spirit of international humanitarian laws
6. At least 73 countries currently stockpile submunitions. We estimate at several billions the number of submunitions stored in the arsenals of the planet today. These stocks, if used during conflicts to come, will pose a threat to civilians. Their massive use would cause a humanitarian disaster much superior to that provoked by the generalised use of antipersonnel mines in the 70s and 80s.
7. Europe is directly concerned by the dramatic consequences of cluster munitions. The Balkans are one of the regions of the world in which the unexploded devices represent a threat for the civil population today. Europe is also widely represented among the countries which produce, stockpile and use cluster munitions. On the other hand, several European countries appear among the precursors of the initiatives aiming at a ban on these weapons, whose humanitarian and medical consequences are unacceptable.

8. The Parliamentary Assembly invites member States to take any useful measure to forbid cluster munitions in their territory and to take preventive measures in order to avoid any medical consequences which could be unacceptable. It also asks them to make a commitment at the international level to support the initiative of the Norwegian Government, whose objective is to forbid cluster munitions all over the world (like the process which ended with the Ottawa Treaty for the ban on antipersonnel mines).

*Signed*¹:

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¹ SOC: Socialist Group
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EDG: European Democratic Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
NR: not registered in a group