

The issue of cluster munitions

Cluster munitions are explosive weapons which are air or ground launched and release or eject smaller explosive submunitions over wide areas. Cluster bombs (the most common form of cluster munitions) release small explosive bomblets which can cause severe damage to life and transport. Concerns surrounding these weapons first arose as early as the 1960s and 1970s. As well as being extremely dangerous and harmful when used during conflict cluster munitions are extremely unreliable and can therefore pose a large humanitarian risk after conflict has ended due to unexploded ordnance (UXO).

The first convention on cluster munitions (CCM) was opened for signature on the 3rd December 2008 which would “prohibit the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians.” The Convention on Cluster Munitions entered into force on 1 August 2010, six months after the 30th instrument of ratification had been deposited. It is today an effective instrument of international law with 123 member states committing to the goals of the convention.

With many member states committing to the steps laid out in the CCM we can see the devastating effects of cluster munitions begin to diminish. However, cluster munitions are still being used in warfare to this day causing irreversible harm.

Points to consider

- What measure can be taken to prevent the dangers of the unexplodes ordinance of cluster munitions?
- What can member states do to prevent cluster munitions being used in warfare?
- Should member states who failed to sign the CCM agreement be forced to stop using cluster munitions?
- Should reparations be given to those inadvertently effected by cluster munitions?
- Is the Lausanne Action Plan doing enough to prevent the unacceptable harm caused by cluster munitions?

Useful links

- <https://www.clusterconvention.org/>
- <https://www.un.org/disarmament/convention-on-cluster-munitions/>
- <https://www.hrw.org/topic/arms/cluster-munitions>