

PAX CHRISTI INTERNATIONAL ON CLUSTER MUNITIONS

Global Day of Action to Ban Cluster Bombs 19 April 2008

Pax Christi International raises its voice for the protection of life and promotion of peace by calling on all governments to end the production, transfer, stockpiling, and use of cluster bombs and to support a cluster munition ban treaty.

As a faith based international peace movement and network, Pax Christi International is calling upon its member organisations active worldwide to participate in the **Global Day of Action to Ban Cluster Bombs on 19 April 2008**.

For more than 40 years, cluster bombs have killed and wounded innocent people, causing inhumane suffering, loss and hardship for thousands in more than 20 countries across the planet. Cluster munitions are weapons that can disperse up to several hundreds of smaller submunitions – sometimes referred to as “bomblets” - over wide areas. They have indiscriminate wide-area effects that kill and injure civilians during attacks, and they leave severe and lasting humanitarian and development consequences from large quantities of post-conflict unexploded ordnance.

At least 75 countries stockpile cluster munitions and 34 are known to have produced more than 210 types of cluster munitions. 14 states have used cluster munitions in at least 29 countries and territories.

Cluster bombs hamper post-conflict rebuilding and rehabilitation and the dangerous work of cluster bomb clearance absorbs funds that could be spent on other urgent humanitarian needs. Without determined action, the civilian harm caused by these weapons both during and after conflict will continue to grow.

The voices of those whose lives have already been shattered by cluster munitions call us to take meaningful and courageous action. Our faith traditions call us to stand with those who have suffered, and to work for the well-being of the human family through relationships of respect, justice and peace.

Part of the mission of Pax Christi International is to share solidarity with the victims, the survivors, their families and affected communities. A cluster munitions treaty should be able to concretely improve the lives of people whose suffering has been caused by cluster munitions.

Pax Christi International recalls the words of Benedict XVI, in his speech of 7 January 2008 to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See. The Pope called for the “adoption of suitable measures for (...) dealing with the humanitarian problems caused by cluster munitions.”

The Cluster Munitions Coalition, CMC¹, is an international network of over 200 civil society organisations in 50 countries committed to protecting civilians from the effects of cluster munitions. Pax Christi International is a co-founding NGO of the CMC and member organisations such as Pax Christi New Zealand/Aotearoa, Pax Christi Ireland and IKV/Pax Christi in the Netherlands are active members at Conferences or in the CMC Steering Committee.

Members of the CMC network work together on an international campaign calling on governments to conclude a new international treaty banning cluster munitions by 2008.

A comprehensive ban on cluster bombs can and must be negotiated during the Dublin Conference in Ireland, 19 - 30 May 2008.² We urge governments to take up their responsibility by seizing this opportunity to take concrete action. A comprehensive ban treaty on cluster munition should be agreed, signed and ratified as soon as possible to ensure the protection of the vulnerable and for the promotion of peace.³

Brussels, 1 April 2008

¹ More information on the CMC is available online at <http://www.stopclustermunitions.org>

² The official Dublin Conference website is <http://www.clustermunitionsdublin.ie>

³ The coordination of civil society events will be coordinated by Susan Hensel, the CMC Ireland's Events and Outreach Coordinator and Tony D'Costa, the Secretary General of Pax Christi Ireland. Simon Conway from landmine Action will be the team leader for the CMC on the Dublin Conference. E-mails: sconway@landmineaction.org; susan@stopclustermunitions.org; td@paxchristi.ie

+ Msgr. Laurent Monsengwo, Archbishop of Kinshasa, DR Congo

Marie Dennis, Director Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns,
Washington, DC.

Co-Presidency of Pax Christi International