

# EUROPEAN FAITH LEADERS' CONFERENCE ON CLUSTER MUNITIONS

Final Report

29-30 October 2008  
Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina



**Religions for Peace**   
European Council of Religious Leaders

## INTRODUCTION

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Recognizing the capacity of faith leaders and their communities to work in unique ways against the humanitarian and social effects of cluster munitions and towards implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), the European Faith Leaders' Conference on Cluster Munitions took place in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina on 29-30 October 2008. It brought together over twenty senior faith leaders representing many diverse religions including Muslim, Hindu, Christian, Orthodox and Zoroastrianism.

Faith leaders worked alongside representatives of the Bosnian and Norwegian governments as well as civil society experts. The conference included educational and skill-building sessions that explored how to increase the involvement and impact of religious leaders on this issue in the world. It closed with the adoption of a Statement of Commitment, "A total ban on cluster munitions - a moral responsibility". This statement captures the rich discussion of the conference and frames the problem of cluster bombs, weapons and the damage they cause within the context of religious traditions. It also identifies areas of priority for future work.

The conference was organized by *Religions for Peace*, the European Council of Religious Leaders and Handicap International Southeast Europe. It was hosted by the Interreligious Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Dr. Mustafa Cerić, Grand-Mufti of Bosnia-Herzegovina. A Co-President of the *Religions for Peace* World Council and Co-Moderator of the European Council of Religious Leaders, Dr. Cerić had attended the Dublin Diplomatic Conference on Cluster Munitions in May 2008, where the Convention was negotiated, and there had the idea to convene a gathering of religious leaders that would enable them to take important and effective action.

The *Religions for Peace* World Council and the European Council of Religious Leaders (ECRL) have become increasingly engaged on the subject of cluster munitions in 2008. *Religions for Peace* sent a delegation to participate in the Dublin Diplomatic Conference on Cluster Munitions and has since initiated a number of projects on this important issue that encompass advocacy, resource creation and education. It has also joined hands with the Cluster Munitions Coalition (CMC), a global network of nearly 200 civil society organizations.

## BACKGROUND

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Cluster bombs were first used in World War II by German and Soviet forces. During the 1970s, the USA used massive quantities of the weapon in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. More recently, cluster bombs were used extensively in the Gulf Wars, Chechnya, the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq and in Lebanon in 2006. Cluster munitions have also been used in a number of conflicts in Africa.

Cluster munitions are large weapon systems in which a larger container holds dozens to hundreds of smaller submunitions, often called bomblets. They are dropped from the air or fired from the ground, at which point the container opens in the air and scatters the bomblets over a wide area - sometimes the size of 2-4 football fields. This area of impact is referred to as a "footprint" and is why cluster bombs are considered to be wide area-effect weapons.

As so many of the submunitions fail to work properly, huge quantities are left on the ground and, like landmines, remain a fatal threat to anyone in the area long after a conflict ends. Unexploded submunitions can explode when people hit them with a tool while farming, or by inquisitive children attracted by their bright colours, or simply from someone stepping on them. The presence of such unexploded submunitions threatens life and limb, hampers provision of relief and impedes development for years after a conflict.

Over two dozen countries are affected by this weapon. Thirty-four states are producers. Submunitions from this weapon number into the billions worldwide. This massive humanitarian problem has been a

matter of concern to aid workers, researchers and affected governments for decades. However, it was not until after clusters were used heavily in Lebanon during the summer of 2006, resulting in more than 200 civilian casualties in the year following the ceasefire, that governments were compelled to attempt to secure a legally-binding international instrument tackling cluster munitions.

In February 2007 the Oslo Declaration gained the support of forty-six countries committing to conclude a legally binding treaty that prohibits the use, transfer, and production of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians and contain provisions for the destruction of existing stockpiles, adequate resources to assist survivors and the clearance of contaminated areas. Ninety-four governments signed this treaty in December 2008

The central provision of the CCM is the ban on the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions. This makes it illegal for every country that is party to the Convention to use cluster munitions or engage in any production or trade of the weapon. The Convention also stipulates clear deadlines for destroying existing stockpiles and clearance of contaminated areas.

## SESSION REPORTS

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### **First Session: Introducing the Problem of Cluster Munitions**

Moderator: Bishop Ioannis of Thermopylae, *Orthodox Church of Greece*

Purpose: The purpose of the opening session was to provide participants with necessary background information about cluster munitions and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM).

The session opened with a speech from cluster munitions survivor **Mr. Branislav Kapetanovic** of Serbia. A former deminer with the Yugoslav army, Mr. Kapetanovic lost his legs and hands in an incident in 2000. He provided an overview of how cluster munitions operate and spoke to the urgent need for increased aid for survivors and their rehabilitation. **Ms. Marion Libertucci** of Handicap International France then gave a strong presentation that touched on the major sub-issues related to cluster munitions: what they are, how they operate, where they have been used and why they are a humanitarian problem. Ms. Libertucci also explained the Oslo Process and major components of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM).

### **Second Session: The Voice of Faith: Cluster Munitions in the Context of Religion**

Moderator: Father Mato Zovkic, *Roman Catholic Church of Bosnia-Herzegovina*

Purpose: The purpose of the second session was to explore the problem of cluster munitions and more broadly, weapons and conflict, in the context of the teachings of different religions.

**Bishop Gunnar Stalsett**, ECRL Moderator and Bishop Emeritus of Oslo, spoke to the deep lessons to be found in the experience of Bosnia-Herzegovina, where interfaith efforts have helped to heal the ‘scars of war’. Noting that the voice of faith is no different than the voice of reason, Bishop Stalsett stated that the purpose of this conference is to unleash the unique power of religious leaders to mobilize their communities. He cited the example of St. Augustin who expounded the principles for just warfare which render the use of cluster munitions as unacceptable. Acknowledgement was given to the role of civil society in both the campaign to ban landmines and this effort to ban cluster munitions, a role that helped to make the impossible, possible. He ended with a strong call for the need to support and care for the survivors of cluster munitions accidents and that this should form a strong focal point of the work of the conference.

**Mr. Jehangir Sarosh**, Secretary-General of *Religions for Peace* Europe, asked hard questions that captured the extent to which cluster bombs are an affront to human dignity. Of the military leader who has knowingly left weapons behind that will continue to kill he asked: “How can one claim self defense in that? How can such a warrior claim to be a defender of the weak? Where is the justice in the peace you have left behind?” Mr. Sarosh continued with: “To our politicians and lawmakers I ask, the almighty has given you the power of choice, the choice to choose good... yet you choose not to make laws that will avoid and forbid killing and maiming thousands of people after peace has been declared.” And finally, “Now I ask the religious leaders; is your voice being heard loudly enough? Are your sermons in your places of worship giving greater

importance to the saving of souls for the life hereafter or saving the lives of women and children here and now?” Mr. Sarosh concluded by asking all present to move forward on this issue together.

**Mr. Ahmet Alibasic** of the Islamic Faculty of Sarajevo linked the conduct of war to Islamic teachings. He noted that the Prophet Mohammed said that war is the fight in the cause of Allah, but that certain rules should be observed to avoid harming children, or causing mutilation or destroying food supplies. However, these principles have not been updated to address the current methods of conflict and as such there is a lack of consensus between religious scholars on issues like weapons of mass destruction. Mr. Alibasic emphasized that there are no reasons for any atrocity, that war is not a license to kill indiscriminately, and that reciprocity is not a principle of war - that the injustice of others does not excuse one’s own injustice”. Religious leaders must show more actively that they are against war and more specifically, against the use of cluster munitions.

### **Third Session: The Convention on Cluster Munitions in the European Political Context**

Moderator: Mlle. Brigitte Chevalier, *Religions for Peace Representative to UNESCO*

Purpose: To explore the Convention’s main elements, the Oslo Process, and which European governments are supportive of it.

This session was delivered by **Ms. Annette Abelson** of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She highlighted three key points:

1. The Convention is a piece of international law. It implies a categorical ban on cluster munitions and it establishes an international norm on protecting civilians that will change the behaviour of even those states who do not sign it.
2. The Convention has humanitarian values and should be seen as a tool for changing the reality of affected regions. The framework to implement its provisions requires support from all governments.
3. Civil society has been a driving force for the creation of the Convention and the relationship between civil society, governments, the UN and the Red Cross must be acknowledged. Members of civil society have acted as experts, raised awareness and created momentum, and advocated with disinterested governments.

Ms. Abelson emphasized that the next challenge would be to ensure ratification of the Convention in national legislatures so that it can begin to have an effect on the ground. Ms. Abelson connected the role of faith groups in the political process by pointing to the leadership of the Holy See in the Oslo Process, a member of the core group of states that drove the negotiations. She highlighted the extensive provisions for survivor assistance contained in the Convention and asked that faith communities participate in this and in the long term work of universalizing the treaty.

### **Fourth Session: The Contributions of Civil Society**

Purpose: To educate about the work of the Cluster Munitions Coalition and its members, illustrating specific examples of positive action from ordinary people.

This session was presented by **Ms. Mette Eliseussen and Mr. John Rodsted** of an advocacy initiative called the Ban Bus. The Ban Bus has been building strong support for the Oslo Process in European countries by conducting a 10 000 km journey from the Balkans to Oslo. They have been speaking to community groups and at events in many cities along the way. Both Ms. Eliseussen and Mr. Rodsted are seasoned campaigners who delivered a dynamic and highly motivational presentation about advocacy - what is it and how is it done? Using striking images of survivors and footage of cluster munitions strikes, they emphasized that advocacy consists of educating and building networks, and has as its goal to make people passionate and motivated: to form an opinion. A role for faith communities can be to educate on the dangers of cluster munitions, or provide information about affected areas that are unknown to researchers or militaries. As all the conference participants are representatives of their communities and faith networks, they can be critical to the ultimate success of the Convention.

Mr. Rodsted ended the session with a strong challenge to take action: “I can see you find the pictures [of

survivors] hard to look at. These people have been described as collateral damage and statistics. They aren't, they are people, as important as you and me and every loss of any one of them is a tragedy and an outrage.”

## WORKSHOP REPORTS

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### **Workshop A: Conducting effective high-level advocacy**

Facilitator: Fr. Paul Lansu, Pax Christi International

This workshop session explored what is meant by the term ‘advocacy’ and examined the experience of the participants as well as addressed their questions and ideas. The main outcomes are:

- There are three main elements to advocacy: educate, motivate, and build a network.
- By speaking “as one voice” and working with like-minded civil society organizations, or those from other faith traditions there is a greater basis for successful action.
- There is no limit to what can be considered an advocacy action. It can include writing a letter to or meeting with a government official; writing a media piece; publicity stunts; a petition; a parade; outreach and education.
- Reflect on what motivates people to take action and act accordingly.
- Involve youth.
- Immediate goals before the Oslo Signing Ceremony include: speak with your network about the issue; take action; join the CMC; get information about the issue into the public eye. Three European targets for advocacy included Sweden, Serbia and Greece as they, at the time of this conference, had not announced they would sign the Convention.
- Long-term advocacy work should centre on ratification of the Convention ratification as well as the implementation of its provisions for clearance, stockpile destruction and assistance to survivors.

### **Workshop B: Survivor Care**

Facilitator: Mr. Jonathan Frerichs, World Council of Churches

Presenter: Mr. Ramiz Becirovic, Landmine Survivors Network Bosnia-Herzegovina

This workshop session considered the importance of caring for and assisting survivors of cluster munitions incidents, and the ways in which religious leaders and their communities can play a role. The participants felt that such a thorough discussion of this multi-dimensional subject requires more time than what was provided. Some important notes from their discussion are:

- Survivor care and rehabilitation contains many elements.
- Religious leaders and communities are able to offer spiritual hope and healing to survivors. They are also able to spread a message of acceptance amongst communities, in places where survivors are stigmatized.
- There is much reason to be concerned about the welfare of survivors, including how widespread the problem of cluster munitions is, the impetus of faith to take action, and the development of the Convention, seen as a positive step forward in the area of survivor assistance and rights.
- Religious communities and leaders are very often those that are the "front line" in some smaller communities where there are no government representatives. As such they are approached for information as well as assistance.

## OUTCOMES

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The European Faith Leaders Conference on Cluster Munitions successfully introduced many religious leaders to the issue of cluster munitions and the Convention that bans them. As the first conference on the subject that *Religions for Peace* has coordinated, it established an educational model that is based on interactions between religious leaders, technical experts, campaigners and survivors. This forum allowed input and reflection from all sides so that resulting strategies were well-rounded and balanced, as exemplified specifically by the two workshop sessions. Some specific commitments undertaken by

participants in the workshops include:

- To speak with government contacts about signature of the Convention;
- To speak with media about the issue, or include mention on of the issue in other media engagements;
- To engage with youth networks more frequently in public outreach about cluster munitions;

The Prime Minister of Bosnia-Herzegovina used the conference as an opportunity to officially announce that his country will sign the Convention on 3 December 2008, an important advocacy outcome. This meeting was also an opportunity for some religious leaders to form relationships with specific civil society members working in their country, such as Serbia and France.

During the conference, participants previewed the Cluster Munitions Resource Guide that has been developed by *Religions for Peace* and gave their feedback for the final version.

These accomplishments will lead to greater action on behalf of *Religions for Peace* and opportunities for deeper partnerships within the CMC. This model for learning about a disarmament issue may be replicated by future conferences.

## A MORAL RESPONSIBILITY – STATEMENT FROM THE CONFERENCE

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The outcome of the European Faith Leaders Conference on Cluster Munitions was the adoption of a statement “Total ban on cluster munitions - a moral responsibility”. This statement was prepared by a drafting committee ahead of the conference and introduced on the second day. An open session facilitated by Rev. Vebjørn Horsfjord, Secretary-General of the ECRL, allowed for the input and suggestions of all regarding content and wording. The final version was compiled and distributed to all participants as well as media.

### **Total ban on cluster munitions - a moral responsibility**

**Leaders of Europe’s major religions, representing all parts of our continent, together with representatives from non-governmental organizations and supported by members of the diplomatic community met in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, on 29 and 30 October 2008 to address the burning issue of cluster munitions and to express our support for the process to ban these weapons.**

**The conference was organized by *Religions for Peace*, the European Council of Religious Leaders and Handicap International Southeast Europe. It was hosted by the Interreligious Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina.**

***Religions for Peace* has from its founding in 1970 had a deep commitment to work for nuclear disarmament. Related concerns about peaceful co-existence and prevention of violent conflicts have compelled Religions for Peace to adopt a wider disarmament agenda. As part of this effort, *Religions for Peace* is joining with the worldwide “Cluster Munitions Coalition” in calling for the end of the production, transfer, stockpiling, and use of cluster munitions.**

### **The issue**

**Cluster munitions are non-discriminatory and have for more than 40 years killed and wounded innocent people – many of them children – causing untold suffering, loss and hardship for thousands in more than 20 countries. They continue to inflict injury and death for years – sometimes decades – after the end of a war. It is not peace when children cannot play safely in their playgrounds. It is not peace when farmers cannot cultivate their fields, nor fishermen draw their nets without fear. It is not peace when people cannot move freely in their local communities.**

Cluster munitions thus keep large groups of people in poverty. The global food crisis increases pressure on people to cultivate areas affected by cluster munitions. The lingering threat of unexploded “bomblets” hampers post-conflict rebuilding and rehabilitation. The dangerous and costly work of clearance absorbs funds that could be spent on other urgent humanitarian needs. Cluster munitions are thus as much a humanitarian issue as it is a disarmament issue. Without determined action, the civilian harm caused by these weapons both during and after conflict will continue to grow.

Religious communities share the conviction that life is a gift of God. Thus dignity and sanctity of life is a value that is deeply held and widely shared by religious communities. This is strongly violated by cluster munitions. The use of cluster munitions is morally reprehensible. No self defence policy or just war theory can legitimate the use of these weapons. Vulnerability is a constituent element of being human. This vulnerability is a moral call to all of us to protect the other.

### The Challenges

The conference found the following to be of the utmost importance:

#### Universalising the Convention on Cluster Munitions

- Governments need to sign the treaty and then to ratify without undue delay so the treaty can come into effect.
- There is a need to work with those governments which do not want to sign the treaty immediately and encourage them to take steps towards signing.
- There is a need for civil society including non-governmental organisations to continue to play their significant role in influencing public opinion and framing of policies in support of the convention.

#### Implementing the Convention on Cluster Munitions

- The Convention on Cluster Munitions is not effective unless states abide by its obligations. This includes clearance of contaminated areas as well as destruction of stockpiled cluster munitions.
- Countries that have used cluster munitions are responsible for clearing affected areas in the countries where they have used them.
- Affected populations should be educated about the dangers caused by unexploded bomblets in their environments.

#### Making survivor assistance a priority, nationally and internationally.

- Survivor assistance refers to physical care and rehabilitation as well as to economic and social re-integration. The needs of survivors must be addressed through projects and actions including medical care, the building of appropriate infrastructures, educational programmes and assistance. The voice of survivors must be heard and their organisations should be included in these processes. The rights of survivors must be reflected in national and international development programmes and policies.
- It is especially incumbent on faith communities to offer victims and survivors spiritual support in the face of injury, trauma and loss, and in the struggle for recovery and re-inclusion in society.

### Our commitment

Our faith traditions call us to stand with those who suffer, and to work together for the well-being of the human family based on our shared commitment to justice and peace.

As religious leaders from Europe’s major religions and representatives of all parts of our continent, we therefore:

- commit ourselves to take action, each in our own context, to support a ban on cluster

munitions and to further the implementation of the treaty. We will urge our governments to take bold and committed steps, facilitate dialogue and take necessary action. We will work through our own faith communities to educate people on this issue and encourage them to be agents of change, working in solidarity with the survivors, their families and communities affected by the menace of cluster munitions. We encourage the organisers of this conference to continue to assist religious leaders in their efforts to take action for example through awareness raising, sharing of knowledge and experiences, and direct engagement with affected countries and communities.

- call upon leaders of faith in all religious communities to make their voices heard and to engage with their respective governments and make sure they fulfil their obligations as representatives of the people. We urge them to take leadership in their religious communities to provide spiritual care to those affected and to guide the people of faith and make them instruments for justice and peace.
- call upon European governments to ensure that cluster munitions are banned through signing the treaty, ratifying it, implementing it and contributing in the international work to clean up and dispose of cluster munitions, as well as supporting those affected.

We commend all those within civil society and among state actors who have worked hard to bring us to the point where a convention has been agreed. After the treaty is signed there is still a long way to go. We commit ourselves to continue to be part of this ongoing process for the total elimination of the curse of cluster munitions.

-Sarajevo, 30 October 2008

## PARTICIPANTS

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### GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES

Dr. Nikola Špirić, BiH Council of Ministers Chairman  
His Excellency Mr. Jan Braathu, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway in Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Her Excellency Mrs. Maryse Berniau, Ambassador of the Republic of France  
Ms. Annette Abelson, Government of Norway  
Mr. Jean-Christophe Thiabaud, Embassy of the Republic of France – First Secretary  
Mr. Alain Rauch, Embassy of the Republic of France – First Counsellor  
Mr. Boris Belanic, Minister Counsellor for European Integrations at the Embassy of the Republic of Croatia in Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Mr. Damir Karahodzic, BiH Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economy Relations  
Mr. Mustafa Alikadic, BiH Demining commission member

### FAITH LEADERS AND CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPANTS

Mr. Ahmet Alibasic, Islamic Faculty of Sarajevo  
Ms. Amela Balic, Norwegian People's Aid BiH Operations Manager  
Prof. Radovan Bigović, Belgrade Theology Faculty  
Dr. Mustafa Cerić, Reisu-l-ulema, Interreligious Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Ms. Brigitte Chevalier, *Religions for Peace* Women of Faith Network  
Mr. Jonathan Frerichs, World Council of Churches  
Mr. Martin Gurvich, Hindu Forum Europe  
Rev. Vebjorn Horsford, *Religions for Peace* and the European Council of Religious Leaders  
Jerej Vanja Jovanovic, Serbian Orthodox Church  
Mr. Emir Kovacevic, Interreligious Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Mr. Haris Kuric, Handicap International Southeast Europe

Mr. Darvin Lisica, Norwegian People's Aid BiH Programme Manager  
Fr. Paul Lansu, Pax Christi International  
Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra, Muslim Council of Britain  
Mr. Vinko Puljić, Interreligious Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Ms. Allison Pytlak, *Religions for Peace*  
Fr. Georgy Riabykh, Church and Society of the Moscow Patriarchate  
Ms. Ingrid Rosendorf Joys, *Religions for Peace* and the European Council of Religious Leaders  
Mr. Jehangir Sarosh, *Religions for Peace* Europe  
Mr. Emmanuel Sauvage, Handicap International South-East Europe Regional Director  
Bishop Ioannis Sekallariou, Greek Orthodox Church  
Ms. Naomi Sender, *Religions for Peace* and the European Council of Religious Leaders  
Mr. Hafiz Ismet Spahic, Deputy Reisu-l-ulema of Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Bishop Gunnar Stalsett, Church of Norway, European Council of Religious Leaders  
Ms. Alma Taslidzan, Handicap International Southeast Europe  
Monsignor Mato Zovkic, Roman Catholic Church of Bosnia and Herzegovina

### **ADDITIONAL SPEAKERS**

Mr. Daniel Barty, Ban Bus  
Mr. Ramiz Becirovic, Landmine Survivors Network  
Ms. Mette Eliseussen, Ban Bus  
Mr. Branislav Kapetanovic, Ban Advocates Group  
Ms. Marion Libertucci, Handicap International France  
Mr. John Rodsted, Ban Bus