

**Statement by Thomas Nash on behalf of the Cluster Munition Coalition
Berlin Conference on the Destruction of Cluster Munitions
Thursday 25 June 2009**

Thank you for inviting the Cluster Munition Coalition to speak and we appreciate the recognition by many states that the partnership between states, civil society and international organisations has been crucial for the success of the Oslo Process so far.

We are pleased that this meeting is taking place. The huge interest and the participation by more than 85 of the 98 signatories shows the continued momentum behind this process 7 months after the Convention on Cluster Munitions was first opened for signature. We need to continue this momentum right through to the First Meeting of the States Parties, which we expect to take place next year and which we are very pleased Lao PDR has offered to host. We hope all signatory states will express their full support here to the offer made by the government of Lao PDR to host the First Meeting of States Parties.

With 10 ratifications already since Oslo and many more on the way, it's clear the political will remains strong to realise this treaty's full potential to save lives and limbs and to ensure all those already affected receive the assistance they need to be able to enjoy their fundamental human rights. We expect to see more of this political will today and tomorrow as we hear updates on signatory states' progress towards swift ratification – we know a number are getting very close to depositing their instruments of ratification in New York so, like Germany, states need to hurry if you want to be in the visionary group of the first 30 that triggers entry into force. We will need this political will to continue if we are to be successful with the subject we have gathered here in Berlin to discuss.

Stockpile destruction is a critical humanitarian element of this treaty – despite the fact that it may seem like a technical domain with complicated discussions. It is a humanitarian question because each cluster bomb destroyed is a cluster bomb that will never cause harm. It is also crucial to ensure that these weapons do not proliferate any further and that regions such as Latin America that remain largely free from cluster munition problems, remain free from such problems in the future. It is these humanitarian imperatives of stockpile destruction that have motivated all of us, including the many survivors of cluster munitions who are here in Berlin through the Ban Advocates initiative, to come to Berlin. Our main message to states here with stockpiles of cluster munitions is that you need to maintain the political will to rise to this humanitarian challenge and destroy your cluster munitions. If the will is there, despite whatever challenges you may face, this can be done.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions is often referred to as a largely preventive effort. Indeed it is a rare example of the international community coming together to solve a problem before it gets completely out of hand. Only a tiny fraction of the world's stockpiles of cluster munitions have been used. If they were ever to be used we would see a humanitarian and development problem well beyond the scourge caused by landmines. We only need to look at the beautiful Lao countryside or the villages of southern Lebanon to see what devastation can be caused when cluster munitions are used in great numbers. The conference here in Berlin is our first chance

to demonstrate the resolve of this community to fulfil this preventive promise of the Convention by destroying all the stocks now.

Yesterday the Vice-President of the German Parliament, Wolfgang Thierse handed over the new German law banning cluster munitions to campaigners gathered outside parliament. When he did so he remarked that some states have noted that stockpile destruction of cluster munitions is more difficult than destruction of anti-personnel mines, but that the goal of this conference is to foster an understanding amongst all states that it is just as possible to destroy your stocks of cluster munitions as it was for mines. We could not agree more.

This is a task that can be done; there are options for all states with differing stocks and differing capacities nationally and there will be support from those states with technical and financial resources, as set out in the Convention's very strong provisions on international cooperation and assistance. But what you need to do is start now, make your plan – do not wait to get the process moving. It's important to remember that the obligation is to destroy your stocks as soon as possible. The 8 year time period is a maximum and we don't believe any stockpiling state signatory to the Convention should have a problem in finishing within 8 years, meaning the extension provision should never have to be used. It just needs to be made a priority.

We are strongly encouraged by the progress to push forward the Convention on Cluster Munitions since Oslo. We have 98 signatories, including 10 ratifications already, states are implementing the Convention before it has even entered into force, in Lao PDR we have a prospective host of the First Meeting of the States Parties, with several states already dedicated to assist the Lao government in its preparations through an informal support group that Norway mentioned earlier. Very importantly there is also a renewed focus and energy on the crucial challenge of victim assistance. We also need all states to promote this treaty with your friends and neighbours and in particular those affected countries not yet on board such as Cambodia, Vietnam, Tajikistan, Serbia and Iraq. We hope everyone will be inspired by this conference to go home and urge other states to sign the Convention without delay and to speed up ratification.

We would like to thank the German government for this initiative and commend German parliamentarians and campaigners for the tireless work you have done to motivate your government to take strong action on this issue as it is doing today. In this period between the treaty opening for signature in Oslo and its entry into force expected in the first half of next year, we need other countries to show similar resolve and take initiatives that push forward our common goal of a treaty that is fully implemented and whose comprehensive new norm is broadly accepted as the new international standard. We are as ever grateful to Norway and Lao PDR for your continued leadership and we look forward to working with all states as we gather steam towards the First Meeting of the States Parties next year.

Thank you.