



UNA-UK

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10 November 2011

Dear Minister,

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chair of the UN Association of the UK (UNA-UK) to express grave concerns about the CCW Draft Protocol VI on Cluster Munitions to be discussed next week at the UN in Geneva.

UNA-UK shares the view of many states, UN officials, leading NGOs and UK Parliamentarians from all major parties that the draft protocol risks weakening existing international humanitarian law, in particular the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM).

The protocol should not be considered as an interim measure that paves the way for ratification of the CCM. It is neither compatible with nor complementary to the Convention. The CCM expressly bans all forms of these weapons, whilst the protocol would allow for the use, production and transfer of some of the worst types of cluster munitions.

We strongly believe that the proposed exemptions of munitions produced after 1980 and those with 'safety mechanisms' are disingenuous and will only serve to undo the progress that has been made since the CCM was adopted in 2008. The last three years have seen a growing international consensus on banning cluster munitions. 111 states have ratified the Convention, including 22 of the 28 NATO countries. To develop in parallel to this process a new instrument that lowers widely-accepted humanitarian standards weakens the whole structure. Far from encouraging states that remain outside the CCM to ratify it, we believe the protocol could act as a disincentive, by offering them a loophole with an acceptable face. Above all, we are deeply worried that the protocol will make it more likely that cluster munitions will be used, putting more civilian lives at risk.

Given how instrumental the UK was in establishing the CCM, we urge the Government to make every effort to ensure that no mechanism is adopted that would weaken or damage existing humanitarian standards and emerging norms. We fully support the call by our partners in the Cluster Munitions Coalition for the UK to work for a compromise at this month's meeting in Geneva that would provide for engagement between states party to the CCM and those ready to take interim steps with the clear aim of progression towards a universal global ban.

Yours sincerely,

Sir Jeremy Greenstock
Chairman, UNA-UK