

**Bratislava Model United Nations 2011**

**DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL  
SECURITY**



**THE CONVENTION ON CLUSTER MUNITIONS**

**Study Guide**

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## Introduction

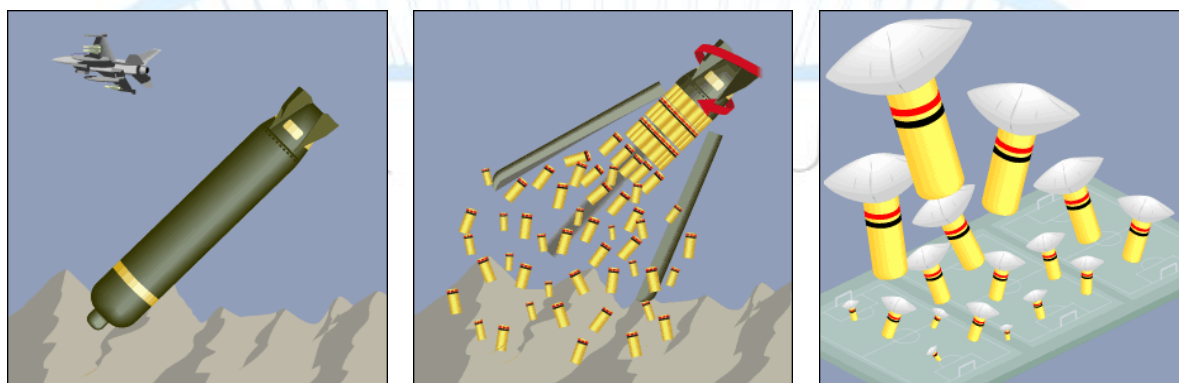
The United Nations with its commitment of maintaining international peace and security (see *United Nations Charter Ch. 1 Art. 1 Cl. 1*) provides a security framework consisting of the Security Council, the Conference on Disarmament, and the Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC). The United Nations General Assembly (GA) is one of the five principal organs of the United Nations (UN) and it consists of 30 different committees with six of them known as the main committees, with the Disarmament and International Security Committee being its First Committee. The meetings of the First Committee of DISEC are held about 4-5 times a year excluding special occasions when meetings are arranged based on current events. Each main committee comprises all 192 states, thus all of the UN member nations can join in the DISEC meetings.

The only organ of the UN that has the power to make binding decisions, also known as the Resolutions, for all member states is the Security Council. Tasks such as dispatch of peacekeeping forces, imposition of sanctions and embargoes must be all agreed in the Security Council. Other organs such as the DISEC may only make “recommendations” that, even though highly respected, are legally non-binding for member states. The main task of DISEC is to investigate and plan technical details concerning UN disarmament policies with their final suggestions communicated in the form of Resolutions to the GA and/or Security Council.

The resolutions of the DISEC are highly respected as the nature of this committee is the further provision of peace and most resolutions constitute genuine agreement amongst states. As one of the main committees of the GA, DISEC has a broad representation among states with each having an equal vote and say in all matters. Therefore, these resolutions are most likely to result in desired action with only few exceptions. Consequently, DISEC will serve as a perfect platform for general discussion and achievement of further ratifications concerning the issues of cluster munitions and its treaty “*The Convention on Cluster Munitions*”.

## Concerning cluster munitions

A cluster bomb or cluster munitions is a type of weapon which contains multiple smaller explosive munitions also known as 'bomblets'. These bombs are usually dropped from aircrafts; however, they may also be launched from the ground. Cluster bombs are not supposed to explode; they however break open in the air and release the smaller bomblets which are designed to explode over a larger area. Bomblets are roughly the size of soda cans and as they fall they deploy a small parachute which then stabilizes their flight and makes sure that they descend nose down. Each bomblet contains 100 grams of explosive and over 300 pieces of preformed steel which are designed to destroy human targets as well as vehicles; they also contain a ring of incendiary zirconium that starts fires. A single cluster bomb may contain about 200 bomblets which can cover an area of about the size of eight football pitches. Moreover, many bomblets do not explode upon impact and therefore pose a threat to civilians long after the conflict is over. The percentage of unexploded bomblets may be as high as 30 percent.



1. Cluster bombs weighing around 430 kg are dropped from the aircraft
2. As the cluster bomb falls it breaks open and releases 200 bomblets full of explosives and shrapnel.
3. The area covered by the bomblets is about the size of eight football pitches. They are able to neutralize any human target within their effective area.

First cluster bombs were developed by German forces during the World War II with their infamous Sprengbombe Dickwandig 2 kg, also known as the Butterfly Bomb. They were used to attack civilian and military targets and proved to be very effective. The technology behind the Butterfly Bomb was later adopted by the USA, Russia and Italy. From the early

1970s, the cluster munitions became standard air-dropped weapon for many nations and were used in many conflicts including the conflict in Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro, the War in Afghanistan, the War in Iraq and more recently in the uprising of Libya.

### **Arguments for total ban of cluster munitions**

First and foremost, the issue with cluster bombs is that they are weapons with limited accuracy. The cluster bombs are not able to recognize the target and therefore they neutralize all military and civilian targets within a given perimeter. This feature of cluster munitions creates many civilian casualties especially when a bomb is dropped or launched near populated areas such as cities. According to Handicap International, almost 85% of all cluster munitions casualties are innocent civilians that are not directly involved in a conflict. Furthermore, many people in larger distance from the epicenter may be seriously injured as cluster munitions contain large amount of shrapnel that are able to affect even wider areas. The shrapnel may leave innocent people with serious injuries or even cause permanent consequences and disabilities.

Secondly, cluster munitions are deadly weapons that have relatively high rate of failed detonations making them dangerous long after the end of a conflict. The percentage of unexploded bomblets may be as high as 30 % per cluster bomb; therefore leaving many cluster bomblets as mines that will affect the society after the conflict. These unexploded bomblets are very dangerous especially for children as they usually have atypical shape and are painted in bright colors. According to the Cluster Munition Coalition, one third of all recorded cluster munitions casualties are children, which raises several issues. Furthermore, the accidents involving unexploded cluster munitions are almost always lethal as people are in direct vicinity of the explosion.

These arguments may not be life-threatening; however, they are equally important and need consideration. Cluster bombs often, along with the conflict they are used in, bring economic problems to countries. First, the bombs affect the population of the country, as there are more civilian casualties compared to other weapons. Secondly, unexploded cluster bombs leave many hectares of farming land unable to be used for their original purpose as they pose lethal danger for farmers. Furthermore, the inspection and defusing of

unexploded cluster munitions cost large amounts of finances which are not easily found in developing countries where these conflicts usually happen.

Notwithstanding the obvious cons of using cluster munitions, almost 19 countries have been accused of using the cluster munitions in recent conflicts with 37 countries known to be affected by this weapon. The advantages, although cruel, are also obvious for countries that are producing, stockpiling or using cluster bombs. They are able to affect large areas of the enemy and are highly effective when it comes to neutralization of enemy forces. It is very important to bear both pros and cons in mind when discussing the issues connected to them and use them to one's advantage when convincing.

## **History and the Convention on Cluster Munitions**

It has been found that at least 14 countries have used cluster munitions or cluster munitions-like weapons in the recent memory. One of the worst cases of application of cluster munitions in the history was the Vietnam War. During the Vietnam War, the US forces had dropped around 70 million cluster bombs onto the soil of Vietnam. It is reported that around 300 people die every year as the result of unexploded bomblets from the Vietnam War. Furthermore, the US forces had dropped over 208 million cluster bombs onto Laos in the continuation of First Indochina War. More recent conflicts that have seen the application of cluster munitions larger amounts were the 2001 Afghanistan War, 2003 Iraq War, and the most recent 2011 Libya Uprising where Colonel Gaddafi allegedly used cluster bombs.

The turning point that started the initiative for the total ban of cluster munitions was the 2006 conflict, where Israel used cluster bombs during the Lebanon conflict just several hours before the peace treaty was signed. Lebanon is still recovering from this offensive which saw 4 million bomblets dropped onto the soil of Lebanon.

The initiative that started after this conflict is known to come from the Norwegian government, hence the name Oslo process. In the February 2007, Norwegian government started to negotiate the terms of a treaty that would call a total ban for all cluster munitions. 46 countries have met in Oslo and endorsed for an international treaty. The treaty that was originally drafted in Oslo was further revised during the conference in Lima in May 2007,

Vienna December 2007 and Wellington February 2008. The treaty was finally adopted in Dublin by 107 states on 30 May 2008 and signed on 3 December 2008. The treaty became a binding international law for 63 states on 1 August 2010 which prohibit them to use, produce, trade and stockpile and cluster munitions. All of the 63 states that ratified the treaty met twice since the adoption of the treaty, in Vientiane, Laos in November 2010 and in Beirut in September 2011.

Although the treaty was adopted by many countries, significant states such as the United States of America, the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China or the State of Israel have not agreed on the terms of treaty and are not planning on adopting it. In July 2008, then US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates have said that by 2018 US military forces will eliminate all cluster munitions without new safety standards, which include a self-destruction system.

## **Recommendations**

As a starting point, I would advise that all delegates gain a thorough understanding of the problem and especially of their country's opinion towards the Convention on Cluster Munitions. It is crucial, for the sake of the discussion, that all delegates have a clear perspective of their designated country's opinions, goals and arguments. Furthermore, it is important that the discussion does not revolve only around why are opposing countries not accepting one's arguments. The most important feature of any resolution is that it is a compromise which satisfies every party in a given committee.

In order for delegates to be successful they must be creative, open-minded and communicative and able to reach general consensus in an unknown environment with various people from various backgrounds.

## **Topics that may be discussed in the committee**

### **Topic A: Further discussion and ratification of the Convention on Cluster Munitions**

Many countries have joined the convention, although many important countries, such as the USA, Russia, China, are still opposing the treaty and refuse to sign it. This committee should serve as an open forum for a discussion about the motives behind joining and opposing this treaty. The issue needs to be tackled and the more countries join the treaty the better for international peace and security.

### **Topic B: Further revision and amendment of the Convention on Cluster Munitions in the light on new technologies regarding self-destruction systems.**

Countries like the USA have claimed to improve the technology on cluster munitions bringing new 'safe' cluster munitions containing a self-destruction system that would detonate unexploded bomblets and thus lower the number of innocent casualties. This technology among others may need further revision and possible implementation into the convention.

B R A I M U N  
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