

Experts Urge Obama Administration Review U.S. Cluster Munitions Policy and Support New Global Treaty

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(Washington, D.C.): President-elect Obama's national security team will have to grapple with a number of issues, including U.S. policy on certain types of conventional munitions that harm civilians. An early decision will be how to respond to the new Convention on Cluster Munitions, which 100 or more world leaders are expected to sign beginning tomorrow in Oslo.

The new international treaty, which may enter into force as soon as six months after the signing ceremony, will ban the use of weapons that have indiscriminately killed and maimed thousands of noncombatants and continue to pose a hazard today, in some cases more than 30 years after their initial use. The Bush administration has opposed the treaty despite the commitment of the United Kingdom and most other NATO allies to adopt the convention, to discontinue use of cluster munitions, and to destroy their stockpiles.

"Obama's new national security team has the opportunity to shift U.S. policy on these and other important humanitarian and security issues," said Jeff Abramson, conventional weapons analyst with the Arms Control Association.

"The president-elect has indicated a willingness to support international initiatives to limit harm to civilians caused by conventional weapons. As president, Obama can begin by reexamining recent Defense Department decisions on cluster munitions with an eye toward signing the convention in 2009 and bringing the United States inline with the new global consensus," Abramson urged.

Answers to frequently asked questions on cluster munitions are available at <http://www.armscontrol.org/pressroom/CCMFAQ>.

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