



Betty Williams, Ireland - 1976
Máiread Corrigan Maguire, Ireland - 1976
Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Guatemala - 1992
Prof. Jody Williams, USA - 1997
Dr. Shirin Ebadi, Iran - 2003
Prof. Wangari Maathai, Kenya - 2004

united for peace with justice and equality

**STATEMENT OF THE NOBEL WOMEN'S INITIATIVE
TO THE
WELLINGTON CONFERENCE ON CLUSTER MUNITIONS
Monday, February 18, 2008**

Delivered by Jody Williams, Nobel Laureate for Peace

It is a real pleasure to congratulate the Government of New Zealand, on behalf of my sister Nobel Peace Prize Laureates of the Nobel Women's Initiative, for hosting this extremely important conference on cluster munitions. Second only to the importance of the final negotiating session in Dublin at the end of May, the Wellington Conference on Cluster Munitions is key to the successful outcome of a new international treaty banning cluster bombs in 2008.

We also recognize all of the governmental delegations that have made the long trip to beautiful New Zealand and congratulate them on their willingness to take preventative action to avert future devastation by the widespread use and proliferation of cluster munitions by negotiating a comprehensive treaty to ban cluster munitions this year.

The Wellington Conference is key to such a treaty that will deal with this weapon now and not after it is too late to avert humanitarian nightmares around the world. A comprehensive treaty must not include exclusions from a cluster munition definition based on technical fixes – fixes that seem to work better in the minds of their creators than on the ground where they've not worked such as in Kosovo, Iraq, Lebanon – and generations after their use in Laos.

A comprehensive treaty cannot include transition periods. Those governments that are not willing to give up these lethal, indiscriminate weapons based on humanitarian grounds should not participate in this process simply to weaken a treaty that seeks to avert crisis now, not at the end of some "transition period." If your militaries are not yet willing to give up this weapon then do not sign the treaty. Deal with weak measures that

will not resolve the fundamental issues of cluster munitions in the CCW, where they belong.

A comprehensive treaty must include a comprehensive prohibition on “assistance,” including in joint operations. What nation can sign a humanitarian treaty and ban the use of cluster munitions by its own forces to then participate in operations where they are used by allied forces? The “interoperability” question is a smoke screen to assuage states that are not part of the Oslo Process yet want to influence its meaningful impact.

The Mine Ban Treaty comprehensively banned landmines and prohibited assistance. Some 156 nations are part of that treaty. Interoperability has not proven to be an issue. Non-use of landmines in joint NATO operations, for example, have not brought down NATO. If NATO is threatened, it certainly is not by banning landmines and banning cluster munitions.

A comprehensive treaty must include strong and clear provisions for victim assistance. We all have learned from the Mine Ban Treaty experience that victim assistance must be a key provision of the cluster treaty, and not a vaguely worded part of the treaty that does not much more than give lip service to those who have suffered the impact of these indiscriminate weapons.

Your work here this week on cluster munitions is historic. You represent the best opportunity to be real and far-sighted leaders and ban this weapon before it causes more unacceptable harm to individuals and their communities. Without a comprehensive ban, the potential for future devastation is frightening. At least 76 nations stockpile these weapons; the government of my country alone – the U.S. which is not part of this process – stockpiles approximately one billion cluster munitions. One billion. What would be the total in the stockpiles of 76 nations? These weapons are also beginning to spread into the hands of irregular armed groups. With a comprehensive treaty coming out of Wellington and Dublin you can avert this potential crisis.

The Oslo Process has grown tremendously since the first meeting about one year ago in Oslo when 46 states pledged to conclude a convention banning cluster munitions in 2008. By the Vienna meeting in December that number had grown to 138, including more than two-thirds of the known producers and stockpilers of the weapon and all but four of the known users.

But numbers are not enough. Those participating in the Oslo Process must not be in Wellington to seek major exceptions or other provisions that would weaken this treaty. Such actions would make a mockery of the humanitarian goals of this Process and the need for urgent action. States who wish to protect their own arsenals of cluster munitions should not stand in the way of those who want to complete a comprehensive treaty banning cluster munitions. They should be clear and honest and walk away.

There are other venues for such negotiations and weak treaties that do little to save lives and limbs. Negotiations that protect the weapons themselves instead of the civilians whose lives are destroyed by them.

The Nobel Women's Initiative supports the goals and objectives of the Oslo Process and the NGOs whose work over the years helped make this process possible. Along with the Cluster Munition Coalition, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and others, we peace laureates of the Nobel Women's Initiative want to see a strong humanitarian treaty emerge from the Oslo Process and not a weak disarmament treaty. Banning indiscriminate weapons is not anti-military, it is pro-humanity.

I won't wish you good luck here in Wellington, because a comprehensive treaty is not a matter of luck, it is a matter of leadership and a clear commitment to humanitarian law. I have confidence that you will fulfill the commitment and the promise of the Oslo Process.

Thank you.

#