

Monday, March 26, 2007
House of Commons
Ottawa

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs, CPC): 

As members may be aware, cluster munitions typically contain a large quantity of submunitions that can blanket a whole wide area in a short period of time. They can be both air dropped and ground launched.

When cluster munitions fail to detonate, unexploded submunitions become explosive remnants of war and pose a grave danger to civilians and a serious obstacle to sustainable development for decades after a conflict has ended.

I would like to make Canada's position on cluster munitions clear to the House. The use by Canadian Forces of any weapon, including cluster munitions, would be subject to prior reviews to ensure full respect for international humanitarian law. The Canadian Forces have not yet had operational situations where cluster munitions were required nor have they ever been used for training purposes.

The Canadian Forces recently destroyed its entire stockpile of MK-20 Rockeye cluster munitions. The Canadian Forces currently hold 155-millimetre dual purpose improved convention munitions which are ground delivered cluster munitions. These munitions are in the process of being destroyed.

On November 16, 2006, the Norwegian foreign minister, noting the inability of the UN convention on certain conventional weapons, or CCW, to adequately address the cluster munitions, invited interested parties and representatives of the civil society to meet in Oslo in early 2007.

Norway later formally invited states prepared to move toward a new instrument to meet in Oslo on February 22-23, 2007. On February 2, 2007, the [Minister of Foreign Affairs](#) accepted Norway's invitation for Canada to attend the meeting. A delegation comprised of representatives of DFAIT and DND represented Canada in Oslo.

The Canadian delegation approached the discussions in Oslo with an open mind and a clear objective of reducing the negative humanitarian development impacts on the misuse of cluster munitions.

Canada agreed to the Oslo declaration issued on February 23 at the end of the meeting because we share the goal of reducing the negative humanitarian and development impacts of certain types of cluster munitions. We entered the following caveats: This may not be possible until late 2008; and, we understand this to refer to those categories of cluster munitions that harm civilians contrary to accepted principles of international humanitarian law. We are agreeing to participate in the process without prejudice to the outcome of subsequent negotiations.

Further work on the cluster munitions initiative would be carried out in Lima, Peru in May 2007; in Vienna, Austria in November or December; and, in Dublin, Ireland in early 2008. Canada expects to participate in all of these meetings.

Canada's participation in the meeting in Norway was warmly welcomed by states, UN agencies and non-governmental organizations, despite qualifications in the Canadian position which were clearly communicated.

