PRESS RELEASE

Legacies of War joins international community to celebrate Entry Into Force of Convention on Cluster Munitions

Group calls on U.S. to attend the First Meeting of States Parties in Vientiane, Laos in November

WASHINGTON, D.C., August 3, 2010 – Legacies of War joins the thousands of cluster bomb survivors in Laos and around the world to celebrate the Entry into Force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The Convention on Cluster Munitions is the most significant disarmament and humanitarian treaty in more than a decade; 108 countries have signed the treaty and 38 countries have ratified it. Lao PDR, the most heavily bombed country, per capita, in history, and one of the first countries to sign the treaty, will host the convention’s First Meeting of State Parties in Vientiane, Lao PDR, in November 2010.

“We are pleased that the First Meeting of States Parties will be held in Laos, which accounts for the most cluster munitions casualties worldwide, as a result of massive U.S. bombings during the Vietnam War. We would encourage the U.S., who hasn’t signed the treaty, to attend this historic meeting in November,” said Brett Dakin, Board Chair of Legacies of War.

On average, the U.S. spends $2.7M per year, compared to the $17M per day (today's dollars) it spent during the 9 years of bombing (1964-1973). “Legacies of War is calling for an increase in U.S. funding to $10M per year over the next 10 years in order to make a significant dent in the current cluster bomb problem in Laos and save thousands of lives in the future,” Dakin added.

The meeting will create an action plan to be used by all states to complete the legal obligations of the treaty, including support for clearance, stockpile destruction and victim assistance.

As a lead up to the First Meeting of States Parties, campaigners around the world are holding public events in August to mark the official Entry into Force of the treaty. On August 1, the “Beat the Drum” campaign featured drumming events in 70 countries to welcome the treaty into force and highlight the treaty’s significance in communities affected by cluster bombs. Although the United States has not signed the treaty, events are being held around the country to participate in the international campaign. In Portland, OR, drumming circles, student groups and local musicians will join forces for a large drumming event on August 14.

Cluster bombs have a devastating effect on civilian communities as many bombs fail to detonate at the time they are dropped. Laos has been hit particularly hard by cluster munitions, which have killed or maimed as many as 50,000 civilians since 1964 (and 20,000 since 1974, after the war ended). Each year, there are 300 new casualties in Laos; 40 percent are children.

About Legacies of War

Legacies of War (www.legaciesofwar.org) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to raise awareness about the history of the Vietnam War-era bombing in Laos and advocate for the clearance of unexploded bombs, to provide space for healing the wounds of war, and to create greater hope for a future of peace.

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