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MITGLIED DES EUROPÄISCHEN PARLAMENTS

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Strasbourg, 25 October 2006

The European Union's position on cluster munitions at the CCW Review Conference

Dear Dr Tuomioja,

from 7 to 17 November 2006, the Third Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) will convene in Geneva to discuss proposals for further reform and improvement of the Convention's rules. Among other issues, the problem of cluster munitions will occupy a prominent place on the conference agenda. Several CCW State Parties, including EU members Austria, Ireland and Sweden, have announced that they will seek a mandate to negotiate a new protocol to the CCW that would ban cluster munitions.

As Members of the European Parliament from five political groups, we are writing to you today to express our support for a ban, and to inquire about the position of the European Union at the upcoming conference on the issue of cluster munitions. Alarmed by the human suffering caused by the heavy use of cluster bombs in the recent war in Lebanon, we are particularly concerned with the following questions:

- Which common guidelines and principles for the negotiations has the European Union agreed upon in its discussions under the Finnish Presidency, as well as in the Council Working Group on Global Arms Control and Disarmament (CODUN)?
- Will these guidelines be developed into a Common Position for the Review Conference, and will the EU be represented at the conference by an own delegation including Council and Commission representatives?
- Will this Common Position include support for a mandate to negotiate a complete and unambiguous ban of the production, stockpiling, transfer and use of all types of cluster munitions?

Following an exchange of views on the subject with Javier Solana's Personal Representative on Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, Ms. Annalisa Giannella, in the EP's Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE) on 3 October 2006, we are concerned that the EU may fail to support a negotiation mandate for tactical reasons, or that the discussion will be limited to certain types of munitions, particularly those with high "failure rates".

We urge you to give full EU support to the negotiating mandate for a cluster munitions protocol at the upcoming conference. The humanitarian crisis caused by cluster bombs is urgent and cannot be neglected any longer. This was demonstrated again in the recent war between Israel and Hezbollah, which entailed a massive use of cluster munitions in Southern Lebanon, and the contamination of Lebanese territory with up to one million unexploded submunitions, according to UN estimates. According to recent reports by human rights organizations, cluster bombs have also been used by Hezbollah against Israeli civilians. We are extremely concerned about the unnecessary human suffering, which is due to the indiscriminate nature of cluster munitions. Because cluster munitions cannot be targeted precisely and leave behind dangerous remains, they inflict excessive harm on civilians, *both* at the time of attack and through the contamination of land after the attack.

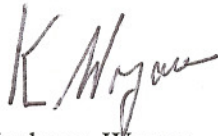
In addition, the military utility of these weapons has been increasingly questioned, including in the European Defence Agency's recently published Long Term Vision, which states that "serious thought needs to be given to the future utility of unguided munitions [...] as well as cluster bombs, mines and other weapons of indiscriminate effect."

We therefore believe that the humanitarian crisis caused by cluster munitions cannot be solved with a minimalist approach focused on munitions with low percentages of unexploded remnants, and that a mandate to negotiate a comprehensive ban of all cluster munitions is urgently required now.

Yours sincerely,



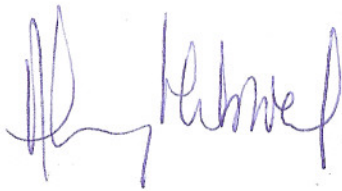
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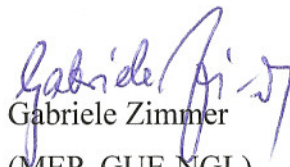
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