Committee: General Assembly First Committee

Issue: The general and complete disarmament of cluster munitions

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I. Introduction

The issue of cluster munitions and the inability to disarm them has been detrimental for the world for centuries. Cluster munitions, which are also known as cluster bombs are shells and rockets that fragment into small pieces of grenades and bomblets. Some cluster bombs only disperse into two bomblets while others disperse into hundreds and even thousands of grenades. Cluster munitions are generally used to defend against a mass number of troops as well as airplanes. They can both be dropped from an aircraft and also be placed on the ground, with both methods having detrimental effects. However, the real issue with cluster munitions and the one that has been disputed for a lengthy period of time is that cluster munitions sometimes fail to explode at the intended time and can kill people and innocent civilians that later come in contact with them. In fact, the most dangerous aspect of cluster munitions is that they can last up to decades, meaning that bombs placed in World War I and World War II that did not explode on impact are likely to be still active and in some cases in areas that are not known to the general public. According to Cluster Munition Monitor and their report in 2017, more than 21,200 cluster munition casualties have been confirmed worldwide since the 1990s. Furthermore, around 17,291 came from unexploded submunitions, and about 3,983 from strikes. Clearly, this issue is one that needs the utmost of attention and cooperation in order to put an end to the danger of cluster munitions and disarming them once and for all.

2 Ibid
3 Ibid
4 "Cluster Munitions: What Are They and What Is the Problem?" ICRC.
6 Ibid
II. Key Vocabulary

Bomblet: A small bomb, and is mostly associated with making up a cluster bomb. Cluster munitions usually fragment into two or more bomblets.⁷

Stockpiles: A large amounts of goods or materials, especially those held at a period of shortage. Under the Convention on Cluster Munitions, nations may not stockpile cluster munitions under any circumstance, and must destroy all of their stock of said munitions in eight years of ratifying the convention⁸.

Submunitions: Any part of a weapon that separates from the original weapon upon impact. Cluster munitions release smaller submunitions upon impact.⁹

III. Focused Overview of the Issue

1) Cluster Munitions Controversy

In 2008, the UN adopted the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Dublin as a way of tackling the matter.¹⁰ However, the controversy around the convention and solutions towards the issue remain that although, they intended to do good, they failed to restrict the use of cluster munitions. For example, the convention’s mission was to “conclude, by 2008, a legally binding instrument that will…prohibit the use, production, transfer, and stockpiling of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians.”¹¹ Furthermore, according to Arms Control, “Much of the debate among participating governments over the treaty centered on two issues. The first was whether future use restrictions would take effect immediately or, as Germany argued, be phased in to allow time for the development of alternative weapons. The second was whether the treaty should outlaw all cluster munitions or permit some exemptions for certain types or for their use in certain circumstances.” As a result, there is still much deliberation over the convention and it has not

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⁸ Ibid
⁹ Ibid
¹¹ Ibid
yet been effective, and seventeen states have yet to ratify the convention which include Russia, the United States of America, and Saudi Arabia.

2) Methods of Use

Another important domain that is especially relevant to the issue is the methods of use in relation to cluster munitions. One of the reasons that it is so detrimental is because there is more than one way it can be used. For example, they can be done by being dropped or launched from the ground. While that seems simple, there are many ways that such two methods can be executed such as drones, rockets and planes. Due to the fact that they can be used in several different ways, this makes cluster munitions extremely dangerous and unpredictable. It is very unlikely that a nation will both know and prevent an opposing nation to use their cluster munitions during war due to the unpredictability of the devices as stated before. Furthermore, submunitions themselves are generally free-falling meaning that incorrect use, wind, and other factors can cause them to strike well outside the intended target area.12

3) Humanitarian Perspective

History has shown that large numbers of submunitions fail to explode on impact as intended. Mass use of these weapons have resulted in nations having tens of thousands to millions of unstable and highly explosive cluster munitions. Seeing as they are considered “area weapons” and can release an abundant amount of submunitions over an area of up to ten thousand square meters, the impact that cluster munitions Sacan have on people is a great deal, especially in populated areas.13 Cluster munitions also have devastating socio-economic effects as they can go off at any given moment near important infrastructure such as power plants, roads, and railways and block such areas from civilian use. Moreover, perhaps one of the most dangerous aspect of the weapon is that they do not just harm regular civilians, children are also a threat because of them millions have died over the years as a result of unexploded submunitions.14

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IV. Involved Countries and Organizations

1) Syria

Syria is the nation that has been suffering the most from cluster munitions. There have been millions of cluster munitions throughout the country as a result of the wars, battles and conflict in the nation. As a result of its continuous use of those bombs, it has shown minimal interest in the Convention on Cluster Munitions and has not acceded to it. Moreover, The Cluster Munition Coalition says Syria, with Russia's support, remains the only country still using cluster munitions, a weapon that has been outlawed by most of the world. Between July 2012 and June 2018, over 600 cluster munition attacks were recorded by the Cluster Munition Monitor. According to Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor, at least 13 types of air-dropped and ground-launched cluster munitions have been used in Syria as well as an unknown type of rocket-delivered submunition. Clearly, Syria is a victim of cluster munitions and must find a way to help tackle the problem with the first step being to raise awareness on cluster munitions and its disarmament.

![Map showing the extent of the use of cluster munitions in Syria](http://www.stopclustermunitions.org)

2) Yemen

Similar to Syria, Yemen is another nation that has been heavily plagued by cluster bombs and the wars and battles that it has been involved in is a primary reason. It has also not signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions, despite being in support of a ban on them. In December 2017, Yemen voted in favor of a key United Nations (UN) resolution promoting the convention. One of the many steps that Yemen needs to take is to sign the convention, especially seeing as it is in favor of the ban on

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16 Ibid
17 Ibid
cluster bombs. Moreover, civilian harm from the cluster munition attacks in Yemen since 2015 has received worldwide media coverage, provoked a public outcry, and been condemned by dozens of countries as well as by a European parliament resolution. In September 2015, more than 60 nations at the First Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions deep concern at the use of cluster munitions in Yemen and issued a declaration condemning “any use of cluster munitions by any actor.”

3) Cluster Munition Coalition

The Cluster Munition Coalition is an organization that has been in favor of world free of cluster munitions for many years. It is one of the only organizations that seeks to put an end to these horrific weapons. One step that the organization has taken in tackling the issue is contributing to the making and implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions in 2008. The organization aims to disarm and put an end to cluster munitions through ways that include stopping explosive investments, bringing awareness to the effects of cluster munitions and urging nations to ratify and adopt the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

V. Important Events & Chronology

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>The US drops 1,228 cluster bombs containing, 248,095 bomblets on Afghanistan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>30/May/2008</td>
<td>The Convention on Cluster Munitions was adopted in Dublin.</td>
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20 Ibid
August/2017 | 102 states have signed and ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions and only 17 states have yet to do so.  

2018 | The Syrian government has denied possessing or using cluster munitions despite more than 630 recorded cluster munition attacks from 2012-2018.

| VI. Past Resolutions and Treaties |

**UNGA Resolution 73/54 on the implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions**

In 2018, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on the Convention on Cluster Munitions back in 2008. The resolution included various significant clause including clause 8 which states, “Reiterates its invitation and encouragement to all States parties, interested States, the United Nations, other relevant international organizations or institutions, regional organizations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Cluster Munition Coalition and other relevant non-governmental organizations to participate in the future meetings of States parties to the Convention.” This clause aids in bringing other important organizations to the table and involving them in helping ban cluster munitions. The resolution ultimately received 144 votes in favor, 1 vote against, and 38 abstentions from nations, which was the most votes in favor in a cluster munitions resolution.

There have been no other resolutions or treaties on this issue, other than the annual resolution on the implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

| VII. Failed Solution Attempts |

Although there have been many successful attempts to prevent and minimize the amount of cluster munitions and their effects, the use of self-destructive mechanisms has failed to do any significant difference in tackling the issue. The majority of cluster munitions are old models and are not completely reliable and should not be used. Furthermore, self-destruct features that ensure that submunitions destroy themselves if they fail to explode as intended do not adequately solve the unreliability problem with cluster munitions and they themselves are not always reliable. Although they have decreased the number of unexploded munitions, the actual failure rate in battles and war is

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21 Ibid
23 "UNGA First Committee | The Treaty | CMC." Cluster Munition Coalition.
24 Ibid
25 "Cluster Munitions: What Are They and What Is the Problem?" ICRC.
26 Ibid
still significantly high. Another failed attempt to solve the issue came back in 1996, where the UN adopted a Geneva-based Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and countries pledged their full support to ban cluster munitions but have seemingly failed to do so on multiple occasions. Once again, promises were made and very few were kept in regards to disarming and solving the dilemma of cluster munitions.

VIII. Guiding Questions

- Has your country signed and ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions? What is your country’s policy towards cluster munitions?
- What efforts is your nation making towards banning cluster munitions, if any?
- What are the effects that cluster munitions have had on the environment and on the population in your country?
- How can the United Nations ensure that signatories of the Convention on Cluster Munition are adhering to its protocols?

IX. Possible Solutions

- Provide alternatives to cluster munitions for battles that do not have a long-lasting effect in the case of cluster munitions
- Bring awareness to the issue especially in states that are suffering from war and battles and where cluster bombs are most present
- Encourage remaining states to sign and ratify the Convention on Cluster Munitions
- Use advanced technology to improve self-destructive mechanisms to decrease the failure rate of cluster munitions
- Impose punishments on nations that are stockpilers of cluster munitions

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27 Ibid
28 "Solution to Cluster Bomb Problem Is Possible." Cluster Munition Coalition.
X. Useful Links


  This link is useful to understand what cluster bombs are, how they work, and where they are most prevalent in the world today.


  This link is helpful to get to know your country’s policy, stance, and history towards cluster munitions.


  This link provides a timeline of cluster munitions, specifically when and where it has been used for the past century.

XI. Works Cited


https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/campaign-ban-cluster-bombs


https://www.hrw.org/topic/arms/cluster-munitions


<http://www.clusterconvention.org/>.
