

To the Ministers of Foreign Affairs in the Nordic Countries

Copenhagen, 18th of October 2011

The National Red Cross Societies of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden appeal to the Governments of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law and to prohibit the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians as stated in the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM).

When States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) meet at the Convention's Review Conference in November, the main discussion will be on the adoption of a new Protocol VI regulating the legality of the use of certain cluster munitions. The current draft CCW Protocol VI allows for the use, development, stockpile and transfer of weapons that for humanitarian reasons are prohibited under the CCM. If the Protocol VI were to be adopted it would establish a substantially lower standard than the CCM regarding what is considered as causing unacceptable harm to civilians. The draft Protocol could for example allow for the use of cluster munitions which have proven to be a huge humanitarian challenge in Lebanon after the conflict in 2006. The Nordic National Societies are of the opinion that the consequences of the Review Conference have not been given adequate political attention it deserves considering the possible implications.

The CCM is one of the major humanitarian achievements in the last decade, setting a standard for what should be deemed as acceptable means of warfare. Draft CCW Protocol VI represents a step backwards with respect to protection of persons affected by armed conflict. There is no precedent in weapons prohibitions where a succeeding treaty provides for less stringent protections. The purpose of international humanitarian law must be to offer ever greater protections for civilians. In our view the CCM standard is lessened and undermined were Draft CCW Protocol VI to be adopted.

We appeal to the Nordic Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Members of Parliaments to do their utmost to ensure that this Protocol, with the current text, is not adopted and that the issue is raised with political counterparts in states that have signed or ratified the CCM to ensure that the political consequences are known.

The CCM made a huge promise to put an end for all time to suffering and casualties caused by cluster munitions. States must now be held accountable to this promise and the Review Conference in November constitutes a crossroad where Signatories and Parties to the CCM must prove their commitment to fulfill it.

CC: Standing Committees of Foreign Affairs and Defence in the Nordic Parliaments

Best regards



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Anders Ladekarl
Secretary General
Danish Red Cross



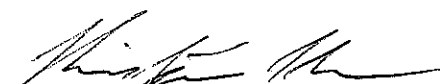
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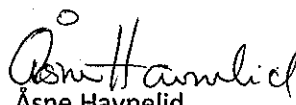
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