

Wednesday, 24 October 2007 - Strasbourg

An international treaty prohibiting cluster bombs (debate)

Ana Maria Gomes, on behalf of the PSE Group . - (PT) Mr President, I am speaking on behalf of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament. These questions exemplify the leading role played by this House in relation to conventional disarmament, controls on the transfer of munitions and the strengthening of international humanitarian law.

We fought for the extension of the Ottawa Convention to all types of mines. Well before the European Council, we argued for a global treaty on the arms trade. The vital need to convert the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports into a legally binding instrument has also been a constant demand of this Parliament.

These questions on cluster bombs look to the future and to what Europe must do to eliminate these weapons which make no distinction between civilians and military personnel and which destroy so many human lives. We are calling for an immediate moratorium on using, producing, stockpiling and exporting these weapons. The moratorium must in due time be converted into a legal instrument which has the effect of banning these barbaric munitions, in the long term, from arsenals and battlefields in the same way as anti-personnel mines have already started to disappear.

In addition to calling on the European Union to begin a diplomatic offensive in favour of this new instrument, we want the Member States to lead by example and eliminate the use of these weapons by their Armed Forces. Not only that, they must also permanently stop their export, production and stockpiling. Every day in the Lebanon, Chechnya, Afghanistan and dozens of other countries where the wars have already ended, people are paying the ultimate price for the criminal and immoral irresponsibility of Armed Forces which have lost any sense of the ethical and legal limits that should guide the actions of civilised people.

It is up to Europe to lead a global alliance to re-establish, reaffirm and reinforce these limits. We urgently need a common position in order to eradicate cluster bombs and other cluster munitions.