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Entry into force on 1 August 2010 of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) and the role of the EU

Madam President, Baroness Ashton, cluster munitions destroy lives and the environment in a disproportionate and immoral way, without distinguishing between military and civilian targets in theatres of armed conflict. The idea that these arms provide security for the states that own them is false and backward and violates international humanitarian law and interferes with global security. Moreover, the principal victims of these weapons are developing countries and their people.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions obliges States Parties to gradually destroy their stockpiled weapons and to be responsible for disposing of unexploded munitions and for protecting and supporting their victims. The convention enters into force on 1 August, but only 11 EU Member States have ratified it so far. It is urgent that all Member States do so, so that we can make an effective contribution to curbing the use, sale and transfer of these weapons everywhere and succeed in prohibiting and eliminating them.

Another nine EU Member States have already expressed their approval of the convention, but they have yet to ratify it. My country, Portugal, was one of those that allowed itself to become bound up in lengthy legislation after signing the convention in December 2008. Almost two years later, the Assembly of the Republic has still not been called upon to give their decision. This tardiness is all the more embarrassing given that Portugal is positively committed to promoting the convention alongside other Portuguese-speaking countries, and now Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde have announced their ratification for August, when the convention enters into force, before Portugal itself.

These delays in ratifying the convention are unacceptable. This is why we are also asking the High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Mrs Ashton, to speed up the process so that the European Union can accede to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, as provided for in the Treaty of Lisbon.

The European Union must be at the forefront of this process, and the seven Member States which have not even signed the Convention must be called to account. This resolution by the European Parliament, whereby we name them, is a step towards this.