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Global treaty to ban uranium weapons (debate)

Ana Maria Gomes, author . – (PT) Madam President, Commissioner, in a recent letter to The Times in London, nine former British military commanders urged the Government of the United Kingdom to join those campaigning for a ban on cluster munitions. Their argument was the same as that made in the context of anti-personnel mines: however useful a weapon may be in the short term, in military logic the fact of causing indiscriminate harm in the long term is sufficient to justify the suspension of its use by responsible armed forces.

The same logic applies in relation to depleted uranium munitions. The European Organisation of Military Associations, EUROMIL, is closely monitoring this issue and its position, based on information received from military personnel throughout Europe, is categorical: depleted uranium munitions must be abandoned as soon as possible.

The European Parliament has already come out in favour of a total ban on these weapons and the UN General Assembly resolution passed last December, which included the issue of armaments and munitions containing depleted uranium on the agenda for the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, confirmed that the European Parliament is right to take the lead and to ask the Council to also take a lead in this debate on disarmament and humanitarian law.

The 'counter' arguments of the sceptics among us do not wash. The most basic precautionary principle demands the stigmatisation of these weapons even before the extensive circumstantial evidence pointing to their indiscriminate and carcinogenic effect is replaced by irrefutable scientific proof.

What will people, and even today's sceptics, say about us politicians in ten years' time when the harmful effects of these weapons have become clear and unquestionable if, in the meantime, we have done nothing to take them out of circulation? Will they say the same as they now say about anti-personnel mines: how could they have waited so long!