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Need for the Convention on Cluster Munitions to come into effect before the end of 2008 (debate)

Ana Maria Gomes, author. - (PT) On 3 December, the leaders of the 107 countries which adopted the Convention on Cluster Munitions in May of this year will meet in Oslo to sign it. The choice of 3 December is not fortuitous. On this same day in 1997, the Convention on Anti-Personnel Mines was opened for signature in Ottawa. These instruments do not only share their date of signature. Shamefully, neither Convention has the support of countries representing a large part of humanity, such as the United States, China, India, Iraq, Pakistan, Russia and Israel.

The Oslo Convention was negotiated in Dublin and 22 out of the 107 signatories are members of the European Union. We hope that Cyprus, Poland, Romania, Latvia and Greece will shortly abandon their reservations, thus allowing the European Union to present a united front in its opposition to these weapons which kill and maim indiscriminately.

These weapons are not only immoral, they are increasingly useless in military terms. The European Defence Agency itself explains, in its 'Long-Term Vision Report for European Defence Capability and Capacity Needs', that:

'serious thought needs to be given to the future utility of unguided munitions, as well as cluster bombs, mines and other weapons of indiscriminate effect'.

(PT) European military forces, and not just them, are increasingly operating in the midst of civilian populations and the objective is less and less to destroy an easily identifiable enemy. As a result, cluster munitions are not only incompatible with humanitarian law, they are also of limited use. International law, moral imperatives and the most basic military logic agree on the urgent need to eradicate these weapons. It is therefore essential to ensure the universal ratification of the Oslo Convention.