

**Sixty-third session**  
**First Committee**  
Agenda item 89 (p)**Effects of the use of armaments and ammunitions containing depleted uranium**

*The General Assembly,*

*Guided* by the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of humanitarian international law,

*Recalling* its resolution 62/30 of 5 December 2007,

*Determined* to promote multilateralism as an essential means to carry forward negotiations on arms regulation and disarmament,

*Taking note* of the opinions expressed by Member States and relevant international organizations on the effects of the use of armaments and ammunitions containing depleted uranium, as reflected in the report submitted by the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 62/30<sup>1</sup>

*Convinced* that as humankind is more aware of the need to take immediate measures to protect the environment, any event that could jeopardize such efforts requires urgent attention to implement the required measures,

*Taking into consideration* the potential harmful effects of the use of armaments and ammunitions containing depleted uranium on human health and the environment,

1. *Expresses its appreciation* to the Member States and the international organizations that submitted their views to the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 62/30;
2. *Invites* Member States and relevant international organizations, particularly those that have not yet done so, to communicate to the Secretary-General their views on the effects of the use of armaments and ammunitions containing depleted uranium;
3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to request relevant international organizations, to update and complete, as appropriate, their studies and research on the effects of the use of armaments and ammunitions containing depleted uranium on human health and the environment;
4. *Encourages* Member States, particularly the affected States, as necessary, to facilitate the studies and research referred to in paragraph 3 above;
5. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit an updated report on this subject to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session, reflecting information presented by Member States and relevant international organizations, including that submitted pursuant to paragraphs 2 and 3 above;
6. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its sixty-fifth session an item entitled "Effects of the use of armaments and ammunitions containing depleted uranium".

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<sup>1</sup>A/63/170

## **Resolution A/C.1/63/L.26 – Explainer**

### **The Vote**

The resolution was passed by a huge majority, with 141 states voting in favour, 34 abstaining and only the US, UK, Israel and France voting against. Coming one day before the signing of the Cluster Munitions Convention in Oslo, the overwhelming support for the text reflects increasing international concern over the long-term impact of uranium contamination in post conflict environments and military ranges. This contrasts starkly with the official Foreign and Commonwealth Office position on the resolution, which claims “there is only limited concern about DU among the international community”.

The list of states abstaining from the vote, while shorter than in 2007, still contains Belgium, the only state to have implemented a domestic ban on uranium weapons. Although the Belgian law was enacted with unanimous support from parliamentarians, it is thought that the government is wary of appearing isolated on the issue, and does not wish to stray too far from the position of other European states. Many of the abstainers are recent EU/NATO accession states or ex-Soviet republics such as Kazakhstan. Australia and Canada, both of whom have extensive uranium mining interests and close ties to US foreign policy, also abstained.

### **Mandate for Research**

At the core of the resolution is a request that the three relevant UN agencies – the World Health Organisation (WHO), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) update their positions on uranium weapons. The resolution text requests that all three agencies work with countries affected by the use of uranium weapons. It is to be hoped that this will go some way towards redressing the focus in research on exposure in veterans rather than the civilian populations living in contaminated areas. As the body of research into US veterans is being exposed as seriously flawed, this is more necessary than ever.

The text also repeats the request for states to submit reports and opinions on DU to the UN Secretary General in the process that was started by last year’s resolution. Thus far, 19 states have submitted reports to the Secretary General; many of them call for action on uranium weapons and back a precautionary approach.

### **Future Developments**

The resolution puts DU on the agenda for the General Assembly in autumn 2010. This two year period will be a crucial time for our campaign. Internationally we will be working to ensure that the three UN agencies take all current research into account, and that they take the scientific uncertainties as reasons for caution, not complacency. The WHO have previously been resistant to any suggestion of harm, and have been criticised in the past for the omission of important research, so any change in their position will be highly significant. While the record of the UK government suggests they are likely to be one of the last countries to acknowledge the dangers of DU, they are also vulnerable to any changes in the position of the three UN agencies, as they have so often been used as cover in the past.