



A CALL FROM THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT TO SUPPORT THE NEXT 2010 UN RESOLUTION ON DU WEAPONS

EP letter to UN Member States - *September 2010*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In 2008, Members of the European Parliament called on UN member states to support resolution: A/C.1/63/L.26 *Effects of the use of armaments and ammunitions containing depleted uranium*. The text invited relevant international organisations, including the World Health Organisation (WHO), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to update their research into the health and environmental impact of depleted uranium weapons.

The resolution was supported by 141 states but over the last two years it has become apparent that efforts to undertake research into populations exposed to the residues of uranium munitions have been hampered by a lack of transparency from some users of the weapons. While the Parliament welcomes the United Kingdom's decision to cooperate with UNEP's capacity building project in Iraq in 2007, there remain at least 440 tonnes of depleted uranium unaccounted for in the country. Indeed there are likely to be other conflicts where the weapons have been used but without transparency, hazard reduction programmes, decontamination and monitoring – to a standard recommended by UNEP - are impossible.

It is therefore disappointing that the UN's agencies tasked with addressing the potential impact of depleted uranium weapons may have been unable to do so. This lack of data on exposed civilian populations also seriously impacted on the European Commission's *Scientific Committee on Health and Environmental Risks* recent study into depleted uranium, which was unable to draw on any meaningful research on either exposure or health outcomes.

The Parliament is therefore keen to support all efforts by UN member states to help develop the type of norms on transparency currently applied to the use anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions. We would also like to encourage all efforts by states to ensure the free exchange of technical assistance to affected states in order to reduce unnecessary civilian exposures and to assist with decontamination and monitoring.

The European Parliament has had a long-standing interest in this depleted uranium and has passed a series of resolutions on the issue. In 2008, 94% of MEPs backed a

call for an EU-wide moratorium on their use. This year, the Parliament has submitted two separate recommendations on depleted uranium to the Council:

- *v) to underline the need for effective arms control, including small arms and ammunitions containing depleted uranium, and to exercise its influence in support of wider, more practical and effective disarmament efforts...*

European Parliament recommendation to the Council of 25 March 2010 on the 65th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (P7_TA(2010)0084)

- *56. Reiterates its full support for wider disarmament and a total ban on weapons, such as chemical and biological weapons, antipersonnel mines, cluster and depleted uranium munitions, that cause great suffering to civilians...*

Implementation of the European Security Strategy (ESS) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) (P7_TA(2010)0061)

In line with these recommendations, the Parliament urges all EU member states and other members of the international community to support any steps necessary to reduce the potential impact from these radioactive and chemically toxic weapons. Given the apparent lack of norms governing the post-conflict management of depleted uranium contamination and the considerable technical expertise that this work entails, we ask that EU Member States support the upcoming 2010 UN Resolution on depleted uranium weapons, which seeks to draw attention to these issues.

Signed,

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