

**Oslo, 3 December 2008:  
Handicap International hails  
the Convention on Cluster Munitions  
as an historic breakthrough**

**November 2008.** The Convention on Cluster Munitions will be signed on 3 December in Oslo. Some one hundred states are expected to attend, including France, which will be represented by its Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bernard Kouchner. For Handicap International, which has been campaigning for five years for the banning of cluster munitions, this convention represents an unprecedented step forward in international humanitarian law. In future, no country will be able to use cluster munitions with impunity and the rights of victims will at last be recognised.

Once it comes into effect, in all likelihood in the course of 2009, this convention will permanently prohibit the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions. All types of cluster munitions which have unacceptable humanitarian consequences will therefore be banned. For Handicap International, the convention is a means of putting an end to the appalling threat which cluster munitions (stockpiled in their hundreds of thousands by states) posed to civilian populations. Thanks to the convention, it will be illegal to perpetrate atrocities through the use of these weapons, which have been used on a massive scale in the recent conflicts in Lebanon, Iraq and Afghanistan.

In the words of Jean-Baptiste Richardier, Executive Director of Handicap International: *'This is the second time that civil society has achieved a ban on a conventional weapon, following the banning of anti-personnel mines in 1997. But this time the provisions for victim assistance are much stronger and represent a really unprecedented step forward. Like the Ottawa Treaty banning landmines, the Oslo Convention will become established as a new international norm, not only for state signatories but also for states which refuse to sign. In the future, any use of cluster munitions will be denounced as a scandalous violation of international humanitarian law.'*

With 700 000 people from all over the world having signed our petition to ban cluster munitions, Handicap International welcomes this historic breakthrough. But we will remain vigilant and continue to campaign to ensure that a large number of countries sign the Convention. We will also be pressing for states to rapidly ratify and apply the Convention.

**For further information, go to: [www.sousmunitions.fr](http://www.sousmunitions.fr)**