



**ICBUW press release**

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For immediate release

**United Nations First Committee Overwhelmingly Backs New Uranium Weapons Resolution**

- Belgium still abstaining
- Dutch, Finns and Norwegians vote yes
- EU bloc split

A majority of states today backed a second resolution highlighting health concerns over the use of uranium in conventional weapons. The resolution calls for relevant UN agencies, in this case the International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA), World Health Organisation (WHO) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to update and complete their research into the possible health and environmental impact of their use by 2010.<sup>1</sup>

In a move that will be welcomed by campaigners, the text goes on to specifically request that states affected by the use of uranium weapons help facilitate the UN agencies' studies.

The vote follows on from last year's UN General Assembly vote that requested that states refrain from using uranium weapons until studies into their effects are complete and that they submit reports to the Secretary General on the issue.<sup>2</sup>

The resolution was submitted by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. It was opposed by the UK, US, Israel and France. In a shock turnaround the Netherlands who voted against the resolution last December, voted in favour. The Dutch government had been under considerable pressure from campaigners and politicians since its decision last year. The UK, US and France are all users and producers of uranium weapons.

Members of the European Union were once again split on the issue, with Germany, Italy, Austria, Ireland and Finland voting in favour while many of the newer EU members voted against. Belgium, which banned the weapons in 2007 once again abstained, a decision that will cause considerable anger amongst activists. The Czech Republic chose to abstain this year after last year's no vote.

In May 2008, the European Parliament passed a resolution backed by 94% of MEPs calling for a global treaty banning uranium weapons but EU states have been slow to react to the weight of public feeling against their continued use.<sup>3</sup>

"After last year's vote took the main users and producers of uranium weapons by surprise, we anticipated that there would be considerably more opposition this year," said an ICBUW spokesperson. "We are extremely pleased that Norway and Finland have voted in favour and over the moon about the Netherlands about face. All three decisions were the result of some determined campaigning from NGOs and politicians in those countries."

"ICBUW welcomes the move to complete and update the UN agencies' positions, particularly that of the WHO. Given the wealth of new peer-reviewed research into the harmful effects of uranium exposure, the WHO's position, which has not been updated since 2003, is becoming increasingly untenable. Even back then they were criticised for excluding key data suggesting that DU is dangerous. ICBUW hopes that the WHO will be more transparent in its reporting process this time."

Of the other two agencies, UNEP is the more progressive on the issue, having repeatedly expressed concerns over the contamination of groundwater and observed that there are profound uncertainties over the long-term impact of uranium contamination. Meanwhile the IAEA's stated aim of promoting the use of nuclear power represents a conflict of interest when it comes to dealing with the impact of low-level radiation on human health and the environment.

The General Assembly will vote on the resolution again in one month's time.

## Ends

1. A/C.1/63/L.26 ' Effects of the use of armaments and munitions containing depleted uranium':  
<http://www.bandepleteduranium.org/en/docs/75.pdf>
2. UN General Assembly Passes DU Resolution:  
<http://www.bandepleteduranium.org/en/a/152.html>
3. European Parliament passes far reaching DU resolution in landslide vote:  
<http://www.bandepleteduranium.org/en/a/181.html>

## About ICBUW

The International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons represents 96 members in 26 countries and campaigns for a ban on the use of uranium in all conventional weapons and compensation for communities affected by their use.

For further information visit: [www.bandepleteduranium.org](http://www.bandepleteduranium.org)

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### **International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons**

Bridge 5 Mill  
22a Beswick Street  
Ancoats  
Manchester  
UK  
M4 7HR

Telephone: +44 (0)161 273 8293 / 8283

Fax: +44 (0)161 273 8293

Email: [info@bandepleteduranium.org](mailto:info@bandepleteduranium.org)

Web: [www.bandepleteduranium.org](http://www.bandepleteduranium.org)