

### PROJECT UPDATE

#### *The Road from Oslo: Analysis of Negotiations to Address the Humanitarian Effects of Cluster Munitions*

This project, launched in March 2008, examines the emergence and conduct of international efforts to address the humanitarian impacts of cluster munitions.

There is both controversy and widespread humanitarian concern about the hazards posed by cluster munitions to civilians at time of use and after hostilities cease. In part because of frustration about constraints on the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons' (CCW) capacity to respond effectively, a new international humanitarian initiative—the so-called Oslo Process—emerged in early 2007 with the aim of banning “cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians” (Final Declaration of the Oslo Conference of 22–23 February 2007). In late 2007, the CCW itself achieved a mandate to “negotiate a proposal to address urgently the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions, while striking a balance between military and humanitarian considerations”.

The emergence of two global multilateral initiatives working simultaneously to regulate or restrict the same weapon system is highly unusual, perhaps unprecedented, in modern international security negotiations. On 30 May 2008, 107 states adopted the outcome of the Oslo Process, a new Convention on Cluster Munitions that, in addition to banning the weapon, contains ground-breaking provisions on clearance, victim assistance and international cooperation and assistance between donor and affected states. In contrast, the CCW was unable to agree on a new protocol on cluster munitions that November, and will continue its efforts in 2009.

In a difficult contemporary multilateral security environment, the emergence of the Oslo Process was encouraging to some. But it has not been without controversy, not least because it is perceived as threatening by certain CCW member states who worry that such free-standing initiatives may subvert existing multilateral disarmament institutions, in which the practice of consensus has traditionally held sway.

Many multilateral practitioners have compared the Oslo Process with efforts to achieve the 1997 Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, viewing the process as a continuation of “new diplomacy”

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heralded by the mine ban efforts. But it is unclear to what extent this is actually the case, and what the consequences of international efforts to address the humanitarian impacts of cluster munitions will be on disarmament diplomacy and regime-building.

Following on from part of UNIDIR's project Disarmament as Humanitarian Action: Making Multilateral Negotiations Work, this 18-month study is documenting the Oslo Process and related work, including that in the CCW, and developing lessons-learned of relevance to multilateral practitioners. Main project outputs comprise seminars with policy-makers and civil society actors, and an analytical history of the Oslo Process, to be published in the second half of 2009.

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**NEW PUBLICATION**

***Security in Space: The Next Generation. Conference Report 31 March–1 April 2008***

“Security in Space: The Next Generation” is the seventh annual conference held by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research on the issue of space security, the peaceful uses of outer space and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

This conference looked at ways to build trust in space activities in the future as well as how to move from confrontation to cooperation as a way to increase space security and improve access to outer space for peaceful activities. Participants and presenters discussed the need for new international legal instruments, with specific reference to the China–Russia proposal for a Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects.

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