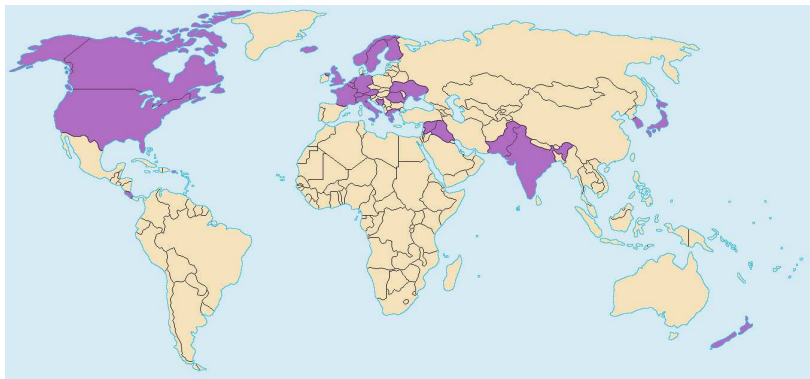




05/02/09 - Edinburgh DU Seminar Presentation – Doug Weir (ICBUW Coordinator)

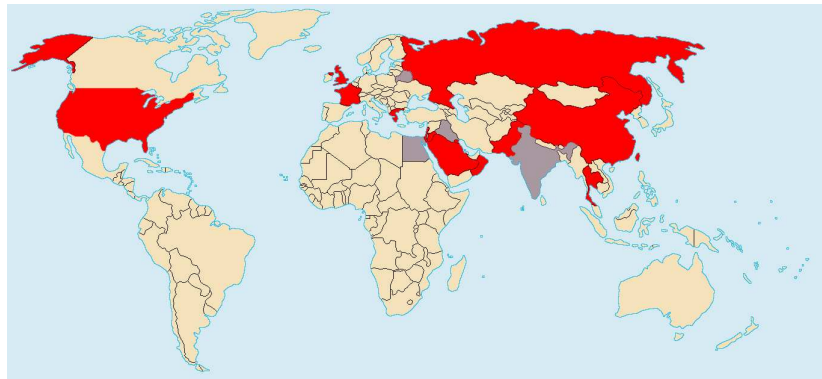
Thank you for attending this seminar and in particular I'd like to take a moment to thank our two MSP sponsors Patrick Harvie and Alasdair Morgan and their staff, without whose support none of this would have happened.

ICBUW was launched in 2003 in Belgium, in just over five years it has grown to represent more than 100 NGOs in 28 countries and is currently administered from Manchester. Our work is supported by over 30 military trades unions across Europe.

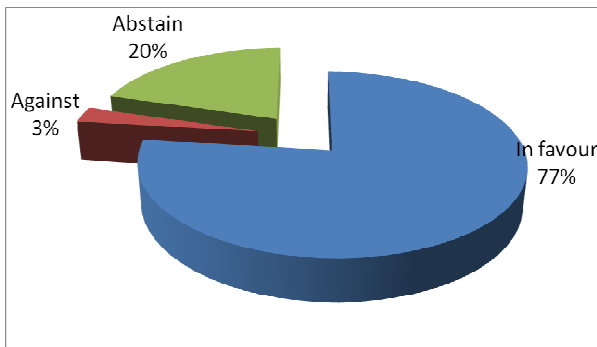


While we are extremely pleased by the rapidly increasing amount of lilac on the map of **ICBUW Members**, we are under no illusions as to how much work we still have to do, as can be seen from the amount of red on this **DU User States** map below.

Having said that, in the past three years, and thanks to the work we have been undertaking at the UN in New York and Geneva, and at the European Parliament, we are now witnessing a growing momentum worldwide for action on the use of uranium in conventional weapon systems.



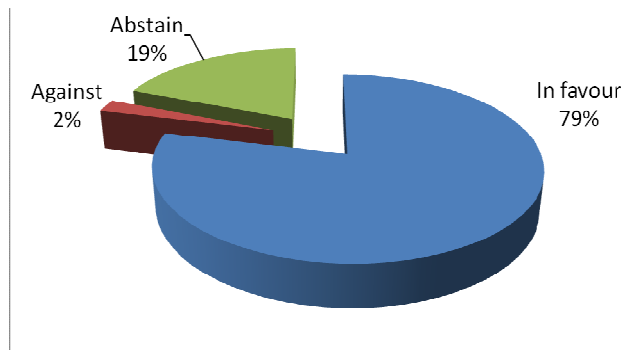
Only this week this spread to the financial system as the Co-op Bank decided to include DU in its list of indiscriminate weapons. This will allow it to cease any investments in the producers of these weapons.



The profile of uranium weapons has been raised dramatically by three recent resolutions. In 2007 136 states supported a **United Nations General Assembly** resolution highlighting serious health concerns over the use of uranium weapons. Excel tells me that that equates to 77% the available vote. This was opposed by just five states, including the UK. It would have been six but apparently the French delegation had some

problems with their button.

Last autumn, a second UN resolution was submitted, this again highlighted serious health concerns and this time it called on three UN agencies – the International Atomic Energy Agency, the World Health Organisation and the United Nations Environment Programme to update their research on the long-term impact of uranium weapons on human health and the environment.



This time **141 states supported the resolution**, including Finland and Norway – who had both abstained in 2007. They were joined by the Netherlands, whose politicians had had a miserable year after they voted against the 2007 resolution.

Only four states voted against the 2008 text – the US, Israel, France and the UK. The UK FCO's response to our concerns is in your

folders. It is pretty shoddy, even by the UK government's standards.

The 2008 resolution called for the issue to return to the GA in 2010, once the UN's agencies have taken the mountain of new research on DU into account. While UNEP have approached the issue in a scientific manner, the WHO has been repeatedly criticised for excluding key data from its position statements on DU. It is hoped that they will be free to publish a more scientifically honest view in 2010. The IAEA's input is unfortunately somewhat limited by its mandate to promote the use of nuclear power, so all eyes will be on the WHO.

But I am getting ahead of myself. As Ian has explained, a growing number of scientists, policy makers and campaigners believe that the use of uranium weapons constitutes an unacceptable long-term threat to civilian populations.

What is the exact nature of this threat? That is difficult to say with precision – largely because there has been zero interest in examining the health situation on the ground in areas contaminated by these weapons. However what we already know from cellular and animal research compels us to act now, on a precautionary basis.

Furthermore there are two other compelling arguments in favour of action, firstly once released into the environment, uranium weapon contamination is extremely difficult to remove. Secondly, the use of DU helps normalise the use of radioactive and toxic materials in warfare – this is an unwelcome and dangerous precedent.

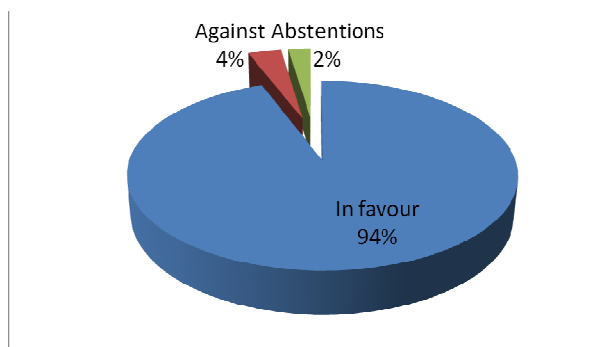
If that wasn't enough, the nature of warfare is changing more rapidly than the methods of pursuing it. Conflict, and the use of force is becoming increasingly asymmetric – Israel's recent attack on Gaza is a case in point. And so we are now seeing weapons once designed for the wide open spaces of Cold War battlefields being used in densely populated civilian areas.

ICBUW is working towards a uranium weapons treaty. If the experience of the land mine and cluster bomb campaigns is anything to go by, such a treaty will not be born in the UN itself, although it may be conceived there. In all likelihood, a group of states will need to pick up the issue and propel it forward to a forum beyond the apparently programmed constraints of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. We are perhaps five years from this point.

A uranium weapons treaty will build on the Cluster Munition Convention in much the same way as the Cluster Munition Convention built on the Ottawa Convention on land mines. A uranium weapons treaty will contain powerful text on victim assistance and decontamination. It will also be inspired by the precautionary principle.

The Precautionary Principle is already taken as a norm in much of EU environmental law, it informed the Montreal Protocol on CFCs and it also finds a mirror in International Humanitarian Law.

Of particular relevance is the obligation, placed on military commanders, to take all feasible precautions in the choice of methods and means of attack, with a view to avoiding, and in any event minimizing, incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects. Reinforcing the principle of precaution will be one of the most important outcomes for this campaign and for the future protection of civilians and the environment in armed conflict. How do we get there? We now have widespread support across civil society and parliamentarians across Europe. This is amply reflected in my final pie chart du jour – the result of a May 2008



resolution on an EU uranium weapon moratorium and subsequent global ban. The resolution attracted cross party support and passed with 94% of MEPs in favour.

ICBUW is now represented in 28 states globally, with the number increasing on a monthly basis. One of our goals is to have 200 NGO members by the time that this issue returns to the UN in 2010.

To that end, CADU and ICBUW are seeking members from across the NGO community, from peace, faith, environmental, and arms control NGOs, trades unions and political parties, all are invited to join a new UK Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons. Among the groups who have already expressed an interest are Voices in the Wilderness, War on Want and No More Landmines who, like other groups who have previously worked on explosive remnants of war, are now refocusing their work to cover other military waste. There has never been a better time to work on this issue.

Will it work? We hope so; in Belgium we have a 22 member domestic coalition. It is no coincidence that in 2007 Belgium became the first country in the world to ban uranium weapons. Remember the Finns? They abstained at the UN in 2007, yet just a year later they were voting in favour and their Foreign Minister was publicly supporting global action on uranium weapons, why? That would be the 12 NGO members of the Finnish Coalition, now so flushed with success that they have just helped create a Scandinavian Coalition, with groups in Norway, Iceland and Sweden.

As user nations, the UK and France will be key states for campaigners and movement on this issue in either one will have a huge impact globally. Work is now underway to launch a French coalition and we will also seek to do our bit on this side of the Channel.

To conclude, not only is a uranium weapons convention highly desirable – impacting as it would beyond the necessarily narrow confines of its subject matter, it is also achievable on a reassuringly human timescale – unlike the depressingly geological timescales often demanded by other areas of arms control. Even more reassuringly, the momentum towards a new treaty is already building, all we ask is that you join us for the ride. Thank you.