



General Assembly

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Sixty-second session

First Committee

Agenda item 98

Indonesia:* revised draft resolution

Effects of the use of armaments and ammunitions containing depleted uranium

The General Assembly,

Guided by the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of humanitarian international law,

Determined to promote multilateralism as an essential means to carry forward negotiations on arms regulation and disarmament,

Convinced that as humankind is more aware of the need to take immediate measures to protect the environment, any event that could jeopardize such efforts requires urgent attention to implement the required measures,

Taking into consideration the potential harmful effects of the use of armaments and ammunitions containing depleted uranium on human health and the environment,

1. *Requests* the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States and relevant international organizations on the effects of the use of armaments and ammunitions containing depleted uranium, and to submit a report on this subject to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session;

2. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its sixty-third session the item entitled "Effects of the use of armaments and ammunitions containing depleted uranium".

* On behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Resolution A/C.1/62/L.18/Rev.1 – Explainer

The Vote

The resolution was passed by the General Assembly in December 2007. 136 countries voted in favour, including all states where DU has been used. 36 states abstained, and six voted no: the UK, US, Israel, the Netherlands and Czech Republic. These states would have been joined by France, but technical issues prevented them from voting.

The resolution was drafted by the Movement of Non Aligned States and submitted by Indonesia, and attracted strong support from NAM states. The Netherlands voted against the resolution due to the use of the word 'potential' in relation to the harm posed by DU, and stated that they would have voted for a resolution that referred to 'possible harm'. This stance was altered in 2008, when they voted in favour of a resolution with the phrase 'potential harm'.

The Report Process

The central purpose of the resolution was to request that states and international bodies submit reports on DU to the Secretary General, who then compiled these into a report on DU for the 2008 session of the General Assembly. In total responses from 19 countries were received, as well three from UN agencies: the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Most of the country responses supported DU being brought onto the UN agenda, with Argentina and Jamaica calling for a moratorium and Qatar going as far as calling for an outright ban. Cuba and Bolivia submitted very strong reports, echoing many of the points made by campaigners over the years.

The Serbian report drew on their experience of decontaminating areas where DU has been used, lending particular weight to their submission. Bosnia & Herzegovina submitted a split report where the Bosnian-Croat federation took a relatively cautious line, but the Serbian part of the country responded much more powerfully, citing rising rates of cancer in the Hadzici area – one of the known sites of DU contamination.

Other countries were less forthright and many, such as Germany and Italy, pointed out uncertainties over the effects of DU and called for more scientific research. However, only the reports of Canada and Spain made out that there was no problem with DU. In general, the reports of NATO member states were almost solely concerned with the health of their peacekeepers, ignoring the risks to civilian populations, who are likely to be exposed to DU over much longer timescales.

The responses from the WHO and IAEA reflected the long term stance of both organisations who have long played down concerns about DU. The WHO does seem to have softened its stance, taking into account some of the more recent evidence, but they also seem to pre-empt a follow-up to their 2001 study by stating that it is unlikely to make any major departures from their position. By contrast the UNEP report showed that detectable levels of DU can be found at impact sites in the soil and air seven years after use, and highlighted the need for precaution as well as fears for the contamination of groundwater.