

No to cluster bomb pact (Singapore)

SINGAPORE will not sign an international agreement to ban cluster bombs but has imposed an indefinite moratorium on their export, officials said on Wednesday.

(25.11.2008)

More than 100 nations have adopted the Convention on Cluster Munitions and are due to sign it in Oslo next month.

The agreement would prohibit the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions, which the United Nations has said 'cause human suffering both during conflicts and long after they have ended'.

Singapore said a blanket ban on cluster munitions is impractical because many countries see the need to use them for legitimate self-defence, a joint statement by the foreign and defence ministries said.

'Singapore remains committed to the responsible use of cluster munitions for self-defence and will continue to work with members of the international community to find a comprehensive solution to the humanitarian problems caused by its irresponsible and indiscriminate use,' the statement said.

It added that its immediate moratorium on exports of the bombs will ensure they will not be transferred to others who might use them irresponsibly and indiscriminately.

'Through this imposition, we help stem the proliferation of cluster munitions,' it said.

Singapore has one of Asia's most modern armed forces.

Major producers and stockpilers of cluster bombs, the United States, Russia, China, India, Israel and Pakistan, did not attend talks which led to the adoption of the Convention's text in May.

Dropped from planes or fired from artillery, cluster bombs explode in mid-air to randomly scatter hundreds of bomblets, which can be three inches (eight centimetres) in size.

Many cluster bomblets can fail to explode, posing a danger to people trying to resume their lives after war. -- AFP

Von: 26.11.2008, www.straitstimes.com

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