



Delegation for Relations with Iraq

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MINUTES

of the meeting of 7 November 2013, from 11.30 to 12.30
Brussels

The meeting opened at 11.41 on Thursday, 7 November 2013, with Struan Stevenson (Chair) in the chair.

1. Adoption of draft agenda (PE 514043)

Draft agenda was adopted.

2. Approval of minutes of the meetings of 17 September 2013 (PE 514036)

Minutes were approved.

3. Chair's announcements

The Chair thanked Mr Zwijnenburg, the key speaker, expert in security and disarmament of the Dutch non governmental organisation "Pax Christi", for having accepted the invitation on a very short notice.

Mr Stevenson explained that depleted uranium is a man-made, radioactive heavy metal derived from uranium ore as a by-product of uranium enrichment. It is often used in powerful projectiles such as bullets and missile nose cones, and as protective armour for tanks. When used as a projectile, a depleted uranium penetrator ignites on impact due to the high temperatures produced. This characteristic leads the projectile to sharpen as it melts, making it easier to pierce heavy armour. When piercing armour the projectile leaves behind its depleted uranium jacket, dispersing depleted uranium dust into the environment. Most of the dust particles are reported to be small enough to be inhaled or ingested by humans and remain windborne for an extended time. When deposited on the ground it settles as partially oxidised

dust, potentially contaminating ground water. Studies have discovered that ingested depleted uranium accumulates in bones, kidneys, reproductive system, brain and lungs, and suggest it may have toxic, mutagenic and carcinogenic effects. The presence of such a substance close to residential communities is therefore a cause for concern, particularly in relation to the health of unborn and young children.

Mr Stevenson continued by saying that, between October 1994 and October 1995, the number of birth defects per 1,000 live births in Basra Maternity Hospital was 1.37. In 2003, the number of birth defects in that same hospital was 23 per 1,000 live births. Within less than a decade, the occurrence of congenital birth defects increased by an astonishing 17-fold in the same hospital! Another, even more horrifying example: since 2003, congenital malformations have increased to account for 15% of all births in the city of Fallujah, where heavy fights had occurred. Congenital heart defects have the highest incidence, followed by neural tube defects.

The Chair concluded that, due to these terrible facts, the Delegation for Relations with Iraq does not only endorse the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) recommendations, concerning capacity building for the removal of depleted uranium from the Iraqi environment: It also supports the world-wide ban on use of depleted uranium for weaponry, without any compromise and with no exceptions! Subsequently, the D IQ urges the European Parliament and the European Union to make recommendations in this sense, and it urges those EU Member States, that are still using it, to abandon a substance with such terrible side effects on the most innocent and vulnerable of the creatures: the children.

4. Debate on "*Damage caused by the use of depleted uranium and contamination due to other toxic remnants in post-conflict Iraq*"

Mr Zwijnenburg started by briefly describing the work of the NGO Pax Christi, active in 20 nations, whose main goal is protection of civilians.

He showed a brief explicative movie about the strongly negative effects of depleted uranium, stating that an international treaty would be needed to ban this substance, as it leaves severe consequences on civilians long after the fighting is over.

He continued by explaining that UNEP went to Iraq in 2003 and accomplished some environmental assessments, which showed that the situation on the ground was seriously compromised. Some members of the Security Council, however, refused to provide funding for subsequent WHO studies in Iraq.

There was severe environmental contamination due to bombing of chemical industry and power plants; in some cases civilians had stolen radioactive yellow cake, which was then found in their homes. There were several oil fires, industrial waste disposal was not organised, there wasn't any waste collection system, plastics were burned in the streets, ammunition containing toxic substances was around, there was depleted uranium and other remnants in populated areas. Polluted scrap metal was collected by the people (often their only source of income), so the rate of exposure of civilians was, and still is, very high. There is a lot of what we call "direct pollution": by heavy metals, fertilizers, pesticides, toxic conventional weapons components, and so on. And there is not enough investment from Iraqi Government. In addition, Southern Iraqi marshlands are heavily polluted.

It was also noted that the very toxic TNT leaked into the environment in many sites. UNEP identified dumped chemical substances, and 5 hotspots to be immediately cleaned-up: they were chemical or industrial sites, with the presence of PCBs, DU and other remnants. Some of the sites were located immediately South of Baghdad.

Mr Zwijnenburg continued by focusing particularly on the problems concerning DU. He said it is difficult to do a good overview. Conservative estimates show that over 440.000 kg of DU were thrown on Iraq in 1991 and 2003. The A-10 war plane is able to fire 36.000 rounds per minute, so hundreds of grenades were expelled in a very short timeframe. The same applies to Bradley cannon.

Based on journalist reports, it was discovered that DU had been used in populated areas on civilian buildings in the Al Muthanna province, Baghdad, Najaf, and Basra. Afterwards, people often collected the used DU shells, exposing themselves to contamination.

In the past, we could note that, after a lot of pressure by relevant international organisations, US released data on cluster ammunition it had used in past conflicts; but US, up to now, never released data on DU usage in Iraq. Moreover, it is extremely costly and difficult to decontaminate DU affected areas, as there DU is scattered around in the form of extremely small and volatile dust. At present, 360 DU contaminated sites have been identified. The cost of decontamination will be from 30 to 45 million US dollars.

After decontaminating it is also necessary to permanently store DU on a safe place. Fortunately, a lot of DU was fired in the desert, and will not need, therefore, immediate attention, since it is not in populated areas. On the other side, also other heavy metals were used: for instance thorium, barium, lead, TNT (in rocket propellants). In Fallujah, white phosphorous was widely employed. It was used to "smoke out" the enemy, often inside houses. Therefore, its remnants now represent a threat for civilians.

Pax Christi mostly obtained its information from UNEP. UK provided specific GPS coordinates of potentially contaminated sites. Embedded journalists helped for identifying the locations of heavy combats. Most DU can be found along the road from Kuwait to Basra.

Scientific evidence shows that DU is a problem especially if inhaled and accumulated in the body. There is a correlation between birth defects and areas of intense fighting. Considerable pressure was put on Iraqi doctors from the Iraqi Government in order not to speak about these birth defects, which makes the studies more difficult.

Concerning decontamination procedures, there is, understandably, a local lack of capacity. Specialised machines are needed to measure radiation. Some work was undertaken by the Iraqi Government, such as information campaigns for washing hands and vegetables, and for children not to play on tanks. But this is not sufficient.

Mr Zwijnenburg noticed the double standards of the States using DU: on one side, they implement severe and precautionary measures for their military personnel when they have to handle weapons containing DU; their approach is however radically different when it is about civilians directly exposed to DU dust. The general attitude, in that case, is that "the potential damaging effects of DU were not scientifically proven".

Support of the international community is needed to provide expertise. United States should provide information about what they did with DU in Iraq. Soil samples should be taken,

population should be monitored, long term impact of toxic remnants should be assessed; DU dust is invisible, so raising risk awareness is very important. It is necessary to work towards improved regulations on exposure of civilians to potentially damaging substances in weaponry. In the EU there are strong existing regulations, but they do not apply to military equipment and subsequent exposure of civilians to related toxic substances. It would also be useful to share information (by the aggressor) about industrial sites targeted and the kind of substances released.

What can the European Parliament and European Union do?

- Ban depleted uranium ammunition. Belgium and Costa Rica already banned it.
- There was an EP Resolution towards the DU ban in 2010 and 2008, it could be possible to build on them;
- There were several UN General Assembly Resolutions, on which it could also be possible to build;
- On the scientific side, it would be useful to provide support to Iraqi Government, both in decontamination efforts and in support to health care problems resolution.
- Apply the existing norms for the military personnel, when dealing with DU, to civilians;
- Apply the precautionary principle from environment protection law, incorporate rapid environmental impact assessment and support long term health and environmental monitoring in areas of concern;

Mr Stevenson stated there is a demonstrable case for a strong and robust Resolution of the European Parliament calling on Member States like United Kingdom and France to stop using depleted uranium. He added that D IQ will certainly try to progress in this sense following the present meeting. The Chair also told the audience that he worked in Kazakhstan to assess and study the effects of radiations caused by Soviet nuclear experiments. There is a genetic multiplier effect, which means that some generations might skip the damage, but at the DNA level the disruption will return, even stronger than before, in the subsequent generations. In this framework, babies get born with brain or spine exposed, and/or with other terrible malformations.

Mr Zwijnenburg added that DU indeed may have an effect on DNA. Concerning cancers, leukaemia would be the first suspect. He also added that the difficulty in Iraq is that collected data are insufficient. Many blood and hair samples have to be taken and studied. It is difficult to establish correlation; nevertheless, based on what we know now, there is a danger for children and pregnant women, that's why precautionary principle should apply. User states are very dismissive. For the military the responsibility normally ends when the bullet leaves the gun. But if you leave a country with toxic legacy, it is very bitter. He concluded that USA and UK refused to provide funding to do deeper studies on this subject in Iraq. Moreover, they didn't provide data of where exactly these weapons were used.

Mr Kelam said that a presentation on this topic was very much needed. He spoke about the long standing dilemma between short term military efficiency and long term harm, for which nobody wants to take responsibility. He expressed his worries about exemptions on toxic military substances. He fully supported the Chair on an EP Resolution on depleted uranium ban. He asked which sides used DU in Iraq. He added there is lack of reliable statistics and transparency is also a problem. He advised to put pressure on the USA for more transparency, especially concerning the identification of risky spots: 360 were identified, but there could be

many more. He concluded that international cooperation is needed for identification of sites and for decontamination, especially in the shadow of the fact that the Iraqi Government does not appear very interested in exposing the problem, limiting itself to just inform the population about the risks of DU.

Mr Zwijnenburg answered that UK fired approximately 1.5 tonnes of DU; the rest was fired by the USA. The Iraqi army did not have DU in that period. He underlined the importance of transparency in order to identify potentially contaminated sites.

On a more positive note, he recalled that lately there has been an increased interest of the United Nations General Assembly on the topics and that 5 states have already spoken about the environmental impact of toxic remnants from war.

Mr Ajeiy said this is an important subject which remained unknown. He asked:

1. What is the impact of DU on agricultural products in contaminated and surrounding areas?
2. How can depleted uranium be transported as small dust in the air - what is the impact of sand storms?

Mr Zwijnenburg answered that actually only limited research had been done concerning the impact on agriculture: the recommendation is always to wash fruits and vegetables. He added that radiation can indeed move across wide zones due to sand storms, it is a hazard.

Mr Stevenson concluded by underlining that the proposal for a Resolution will be taken forward to see if any robust action is possible.

5. Any other business

None.

6. Date and place of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on the 23 January 2014, from 11:30 to 12:30 in Brussels.

**ПИСЪТЪВЕН ЛИСТ/LISTA DE ASISTENCIA/PREZENČNÍ LISTINA/DELTAGERLISTE/
ANWESENHEITSLISTE/KOHALOLIJATE NIMEKIRI/ΚΑΤΑΣΤΑΣΗ ΠΑΡΟΝΤΩΝ/RECORD OF ATTENDANCE/
LISTE DE PRÉSENCE/ELENCO DI PRESENZA/APMEKLĒJUMU REĢISTRŠ/DALYVIŲ SAŖAŠAS/JELENLÉTI ÍV/
REĢISTRU TA' ATTENDENZA/PRESENTIELIJST/LISTA OBECNOŠCI/LISTA DE PRESENÇAS/LISTĂ DE PREZENȚĂ/
PREZENČNÁ LISTINA/SEZNAM NAVZOČIH/LÄSNÄOLOLISTA/DELTAGARLISTA**

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Struan STEVENSON (P)
Членове/Diputados/Poslanci/Medlemmer/Mitglieder/Parlamendiliikmed/Μέλη/Members/Députés/Deputati/Deputāti/Nariai/Képviselek/Membri/Leden/Posłowie/Deputados/Deputați/Jäsenet/Ledamöter
Заместници/Suplentes/Náhradníci/Stedfortrædere/Stellvertreter/Asendusliikmed/Αναπληρωτές/Substitutes/Suppléants/Supplenti/Aizstājēji/Pavaduojantys nariai/Póttagok/Sostituti/Plaatsvervangers/Zastępcy/Membros suplentes/Supleanți/Náhradníci/Namestniki/Varajäsenet/Suppleanter
Tunne KELAM

187 (2)
193 (3)
49 (6) (Точка от дневния ред/Punto del orden del día/Bod pořadu jednání (OJ)/Punkt på dagsordenen/Tagesordnungspunkt/Päevakorrapunkt/Ημερήσια Διάταξη Σημείο/Agenda item/Point OJ/Punto all'ordine del giorno/Darba kārtības punkts/Darbotvarkēs punktas/Napirendi pont/Punt fuq l-aġenda/Agendapunt/Punkt porządku dziennego/Ponto OD/Punct de pe ordinea de zi/Bod programu schôdze/Točka UL/Esityslistan kohta/Föredragningslista punkt)

Наблюдатели/Observadores/Pozorovatelé/Observatører/Beobachter/Vaatlejad/Παρατηρητές/Observers/Observateurs/Osservatori/Novērotāji/Stebētāji/Megfigyelők/Osservatori/Waarnemers/Obserwatorzy/Observadores/Observatori/Pozorovatelia/Opazovalci/Tarkkailijat/Observatörer

По покана на председателя/Por invitación del presidente/Na pozvání předsedy/Efter indbydelse fra formanden/Auf Einladung des Vorsitzenden/Esimehe kutsel/Με πρόσκληση του Προέδρου/At the invitation of the Chair(wo)man/Sur l'invitation du président/Su invito del presidente/Pēc priekšsēdētāja uzaicinājuma/Pirmininkui pakvietus/Az elnök meghívására/Fuq stedina tal-President/Op uitnodiging van de voorzitter/Na zaproszenie Przewodniczącego/A convite do Presidente/La invitația președintelui/Na pozwanie predsedu/Na povabilo predsednika/Puheenjohtajan kutsusta/På ordförandens inbjudan

Wim Zwijnenburg, Security and Disarmament, IKV Pax Christi;

Съвет/Consejo/Rada/Rådet/Rat/Νοῦκογο/Συμβούλιο/Council/Conseil/Consiglio/Padome/Taryba/Tanács/Kunsill/Raad/Conselho/Consiliu/Svet/Neuvosto/Rådet (*)

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Други учасници/Otros participantes/Ostatní účastníci/Endvidere deltog/Andere Teilnehmer/Muud osalejad/Επίσης Παρόντες/Other participants/Autres participants/Altri partecipanti/Citi klātesošie/Kiti dalyviai/Más résztvevők/Partecipanti oħra/Andere aanwezigen/Inni uczestnicy/Outros participantes/Alți participanți/Iní účastníci/Dруги udeleženci/Muut osallistujat/Övriga deltagare

Wakas Saad Alhayani - Iraqi Embassy, Zana Kurda - KRG-EU Mission, Delavar Ajgeiy - KRG

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PPE	Roberto GIANNELLA
S&D	
ALDE	Airis MEIER
ECR	
Verts/ALE	
GUE/NGL	
EFD	
NI	

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<p>DG PRES DG IPOL DG EXPO DG COMM DG PERS DG INLO DG TRAD DG INTE DG FINS DG ITEC</p>	<p>Michael REINPRECHT (HoU)</p>
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<p>Rok KOZELJ, Robertino BABIC</p>	

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