



## Parliament calls for a global ban on depleted uranium weapons

In a resolution adopted on depleted uranium (DU) weapons, the House calls for a moratorium on their use, increased pressure for an international treaty to ban them, and more research on these weapons. The resolution "strongly reiterates its call on all EU Member States and NATO countries to impose a moratorium on the use of depleted uranium weapons and to redouble efforts towards a global ban." The resolution was adopted with 491 votes in favour, 18 against and 12 abstentions.

Depleted uranium is used in ammunition, to increase the strength of casings for penetrating armour. Upon impact, however, the depleted uranium can be dispersed in the form of DU dust, which can cover large areas of conflict zones, and have adverse health effects both for soldiers and civilians, even long after the conflict is over.

The Parliament addressed an oral question to both the Commission and the Council on the subject. Annemie **Neyts** (ALDE, BE), one of the question's authors, asked "what specific measures can be taken to halt exposure to such DU for both soldiers and civilians?" Another author, Ana **Gomes** (PES, PT) noted that "the most basic cautionary principle should get us to stop manufacturing such weapons."

The Council presidency replied that since no consensus exists on this topic in the Council, there's not much it can do at this juncture. Commissioner Louis **Michel** noted that military issues of this nature lie outside the competence of the European Commission, but expressed his willingness to conduct a study to re-examine the effects of DU exposure on human health. He also noted that the Commission does fund efforts such as projects to remove unexploded ordnance out of post-conflict zones, citing the example of Lebanon, where 5 million euros of EU funds have been spent for this purpose.

The joint resolution adopted by Parliament "urges the Member States to adhere to paragraph 1 of the UN resolution adopted on 5 December 2007 and to submit a report with their views on the effects of the use of armaments and ammunition containing depleted uranium." It also calls on the Member States and the Council to take the lead in working towards an international treaty--through the UN or through a 'coalition of the willing'--to establish a ban on the development, production, stockpiling, transfer, testing and use of uranium weapons as well as the destruction or recycling of existing stocks, should there be conclusive scientific evidence of harm caused by such weapons."

The resolution "strongly reiterates its call on all EU Member States and NATO countries to impose a moratorium on the use of depleted uranium weapons and to redouble efforts towards a global ban." It also urges Member States "not to use depleted uranium weapons in ESDP operations and not to deploy military and civilian personnel in regions where no guarantee can be given to the effect that depleted uranium has not been, or will not be, used."

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