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ARTICLE ON CCW REVCON FOR THE PARLIAMENT MAGAZINE

In E.P. Magazine

I have always defended that the EU should take a leading role in fighting for global arms control and disarmament.

Much is expected from our Union, since no other major global actor has the resolve and the credibility to take these crucial causes forward.

This is why I and others expect so much from the Third Review Conference on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), which takes place from 7 to 17 November. One issue of particular relevance, and one which will certainly figure prominently in the Conference's programme, is the issue of how to control cluster bombs. Quite simply, many of us in the European Parliament believe that these horrendous weapons should be banned altogether, and that this Review Conference is a perfect opportunity to do it.

The catastrophic effects of the use of cluster bombs by Israel in Southern Lebanon are there for all to see. And feel. Hezbollah, too, used them indiscriminately on Israeli cities, albeit not on such a massive scale.

In that sense, I have joined fellow MEPs Beer, von Wogau, Neyts and Zimmer in a cross-party initiative to send a letter to the Finnish Presidency of the European Council, asking for clarifications on what the EU's position is going to be in the Review Conference.

We have three concerns:

Which common guidelines and principles for the negotiations in the Review Conference has the European Union agreed upon?

Will these guidelines be developed into a binding EU Common Position for the Review Conference?

Will this Common Position include support for a mandate to negotiate a complete and unambiguous ban of the production, stockpiling, transfer and use of all types of cluster munitions?

Is this a utopian position? Should it be abandoned for a more careful, tactical approach as some in the EU think? We don't think so. The reason for the ultimate success of the Ottawa Convention on Antipersonnel Landmines was the simplicity of its principles (no more use, no more production, no more transfer). The European Defence Agency, for example, which was created to help the member states of the European Union think, act, buy and sell more collectively in the field of defence, recently produced a Long Term Vision for European Defence Capability and Capacity Needs, where it clearly stated that taking into account the nature of modern warfare, and the imperatives of international law "serious thought needs to

be given to the future utility of unguided munitions [...] as well as cluster bombs, mines and other weapons of indiscriminate effect."

In short, these weapons are wrong and immoral and they have to be banned once and for all, just like anti-personnel landmines were.