

# Countries destroying cluster bomb stockpiles - report

By [Jonathan Lynn](#)

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GENEVA, May 29 (Reuters) – Several of the 96 states that have so far signed a treaty to ban cluster bombs have started to destroy their stockpiles of the deadly weapons even before the treaty is ratified, an advocacy group said on Friday.

Supporters of the ban on the munitions that have killed or maimed tens of thousands of people said they hope the United States, which remains outside the pact along with Russia, China and other powers, will shortly sign up.

“Only a few years ago the destruction of these stockpiled cluster munitions would have been unthinkable, but there has been a sea change of opinion against this weapon,” said Steve Goose of non-governmental organisation Human Rights Watch.

“In an incredibly short period of time, many governments have moved from staunchly defending the need for cluster munitions to completely rejecting them,” he said in a statement on the launch of a report on efforts to ban the weapons.

Goose said Spain had already completed the destruction of its stockpile, and Colombia was close to doing so. Canada and half a dozen European countries were also in the process.

The treaty was signed in Oslo last December by over 90 countries after a campaign to outlaw cluster bombs.

The bombs contain scores or hundreds of submunitions or “bomblets” that blanket wide areas and which may explode years later, posing lethal danger to civilians especially children.

Campaigners for the ban were pleased 35 former users, producers, stockpilers and exporters of the weapons, including Britain and France, have signed up.

Signatories include 20 members of the NATO alliance as well as countries where the weapons have been used, such as Afghanistan, Laos and Lebanon.

The treaty will come into force six months after it has been ratified by 30 countries.

So far seven countries — Austria, Ireland, Laos, Mexico, Norway, Sierra Leone and the Vatican — have ratified the treaty and Goose said he was confident the remainder of the 30 countries would follow suit by the end of the year.

Campaigners hope President Barack Obama will sign up the United States, which has

already banned exports of the weapons and currently plans to ban them from 2018.

Of countries staying away, Brazil, which cites the economic benefit of producing and selling the weapons, has been a big disappointment, said Goose. (For a FACTBOX on cluster munitions click on [ID:LT581906]) (For the full report go to: [www.im.icbl.org/cm/2009](http://www.im.icbl.org/cm/2009) )

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