

Depleted uranium weapons

That the synod

Noting that uranium is a toxic, radioactive heavy metal that is now widely used in weapons and in active combat by Australia's allies (the USA, NATO), that it can accumulate at particular sites in humans (eg kidneys and bones), animals and plants, and that there is significant evidence to suggest that the harms that depleted uranium (DU) has caused to children, adult civilians and military personnel have been under-estimated and ignored by governments, and

Noting that DU weapons have been used in the 1991 Gulf War, and more recently in former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Iraq (and probably in other places),

Calls for the following actions with regard to depleted uranium weapons, asking members of the church, the Moderator and UnitingCare to advocate for these outcomes with the appropriate governments and other bodies.

1. Don't leave people dying from DU.

Provide treatment, monitoring and research regarding health effects

- a. Governments who used depleted uranium weapons or participated in military actions where they were used, must pay for the assessment and treatment of any conditions likely to be related to DU, for all those who may have been exposed to depleted uranium weapons debris or dust – this includes military personnel, veterans and civilians.
- b. Health data must be collected and analysed by independent medical researchers regarding the health and DU status of military personnel, veterans and civilians who were exposed to depleted uranium weapons, debris or dust, and their families.
- c. Health programs must be implemented in all places where DU has been used or to which DU contamination may have spread. Surrounding countries may in some cases have been affected. Australia has been involved in several of these places.
- d. As long as DU weapons continue to be used, governments must put in place proper facilities so that in future all military personnel and civilians can be assessed and treated immediately after exposure to depleted uranium weapons, debris or dust, and so that full and proper health records are available for future health research.
- e. The fact that some health problems may have been caused by other toxic substances or events should not be considered a valid excuse to avoid proper monitoring and treatment of populations for DU exposure.

2. Don't rubbish the world with DU.

Clean up of the debris from depleted uranium weapons:

- a. Governments who used depleted uranium weapons or participated in military actions where they were used, must, in consultation with the government in each place, arrange for and pay for the clean up of all depleted uranium debris.
- b. Governments who use DU weapons must be required to maintain and make public maps showing the sites where DU was used and the probable areas of contamination.
- c. Australia, having been engaged in military action alongside nations using DU weapons, shares the responsibility for clean up, whether or not its own troops have used DU.
- d. The United Nations Environmental Program, in consultation with major scientific bodies, must establish rigorous standards for the clean up of depleted uranium weapons, debris and dust.

Explanatory note: This call for the clean up of DU does not imply that it is possible to fully reverse the effects of the use of DU weapons. Clean up minimizes the damage and future risks to human health and to the environment; it probably does not eliminate them.

3. Ban DU weapons.

Uranium weapons should not be used.

- a. Because the debris and dust can never be fully cleaned up, and because the debris and dust affect civilians and troops indiscriminately, these weapons should not be used. They should be considered to be weapons that are “unnecessarily injurious and of indiscriminate effect”, like landmines.
- b. Manufacture, sale, supply and use of DU weapons must be made unlawful acts in Australian and international law.

4. Australia has a moral responsibility to act

Since some of Australia's allies in recent military actions have used DU, Australia, in response to the problem of DU weapons must

- a. Use the most up to date testing DU screening procedures for the DU testing of ADF personnel announced in August 2003
- b. Ban the use of DU weapons by Australian troops
- c. Refuse to participate in military actions where DU weapons will be used
- d. Ban the use of DU weapons on Australian soil or in Australian territorial waters, by visiting troops of other nations.
- e. Work for an international ban (moratorium?) on DU weapons
- f. Refuse to sell uranium to nations that manufacture, supply, buy or use DU weapons.