

ICBUW 20th Anniversary: Messages and Greetings

Ria Verjauw, Co-Founder

It was in 2002, during a peace camp in the state of Nevada, close to ground Zero where more than 500 nuclear tests were executed on the land of the Western Shoshoni, that I met with Damacio Lopez.

Damacio organised a workshop on DU and DU weaponry. It was the first time that I heard about these radioactive and chemical toxic weapons. I was surprised, triggered and wanted to learn more about it.

Damacio proposed to come to Europe the next year 2003 and asked me to organise a speaking tour for him to inform people and politicians about the danger of these weapons, which I did. I made appointments with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with members of the European Parliament, journalists and also with friends activists who proposed to organise meetings to inform the people. We were successful with our plan. Damacio spoke about his own experience with DU weapon tests close to his home in New Mexico. It appealed to people.

The time was ripe to take action because the Balkan syndrome was well known in Europe amongst the military and politicians, there were several well-known cases of military personnel who suffered from the Balkan syndrome. The press and media were ready to report on it.

One of the journalists that we met wrote a book on the issue 'Met Stille Trom'.

One of my friends introduced us to Fons Vandeputte from Berlaar Belgium, a remarkable man. We explained our mission and Damacio had a plan to invite international human rights and peace activists, academics and others to Belgium. The plan was to start an international network to campaign against DU weapons. But how to start without any financial or logistic means.

Without any hesitation Fons Vandeputte offered us accommodation and logistics to start a first meeting.

He hosted the participants in B&B and in his own house, gave us food for free etc. I'm still very grateful for his generosity.

Damacio invited people from US – Japan – UK – Holland – Germany - Belgium – Great Britain...

The positive energy and the willingness of the group to work together was present. We discussed about our goal to campaign for:

A moratorium or a ban. We choose to go for the ban.

We mirrored the campaign on the cluster munition campaign which was successful. So focussing on one type of weapon and campaigning on it could be achievable.

An office and coordination were set up first in the Netherlands, then in Manchester UK and now the international coordination works from Berlin thanks to Manfred Mohr and Ilia Kukin.

Why we still have no ban treaty?

For many years we were able to lobby national governments to adopt a DU weapons ban on national level. We organised meetings in Finland, Germany, Sweden, UK, France, Costa Rica, Belgium, Ireland, United States... We lobbied UN delegations in NY and Geneva. Several resolutions were adopted throughout the years. They strengthen our campaign. Thanks to Els de Groen the EP adopted in 2008 a far-reaching resolution on a moratorium with the view on a total ban. Many conferences were organised in Japan, US, Finland, Sweden, Germany, Norway, Costa Rica and many more. It is admirable to notice that most of all this work was done by motivated volunteers.

We were close to several national legislations in the Nordic countries, New Zealand and Ireland. Until now only Belgium and Costa Rica adopted a nation ban law.

During that lobby time we were funded by Norway so we could afford a coordinator, Doug Weir, and a team to support him.

Unfortunately, the funding stopped, and we had to reduce our lobby activities.

Until more countries join Belgium and Costa Rica in passing national legislation banning DU weapons, the international community will not receive the signal that the world is ready for a global ban treaty. This was also said last month by the Belgian Minister of FA as part of her answer to a parliamentary question on DU deliveries by UK and US to Ukraine.

And now, dear people, 20 years later, we come together again here in Munich to celebrate our 20th anniversary. I can't really say that it is a celebration because of all the terrible war crimes that happen right now.

We were shocked by the news that the UK and US are supplying depleted uranium weapons to Ukraine, where they will be used on the battlefield.

No lessons have been learned from the Balkan War and the Iraq War nor from the many studies and reports that demonstrate the harmfulness of these weapons.

The human cost of DU weapons is too high. From a human perspective we cannot tolerate the immense suffering caused by DU weapons even long after war ended.

The starting point of our work is the fundamental rejection of war as a means of conflict resolution. War always means destruction of the environment and all living creatures.

In this mindset we come together today... 20 years later. Do we remain determined to achieve our goal? Will we continue to join forces worldwide? Will we be able to avoid more human suffering from DU weapon use? I really hope so.

Damacio Lopez, Co-Founder

On the 20th Anniversary of ICBUW

Thirty seven years ago I discovered that uranium weapons were being tested less than two miles from my ancestral home in Socorro, New Mexico. This information had been leaked to me by a relative who was employed at the testing facility that was operated by New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, a state supported university.

Little did I know at the time that this bit of information would change my life forever. I left my career as a professional golfer and began a campaign to stop the testing of these weapons in Socorro. After a time I learn that over fifty sites across the United States were manufacturing and testing these weapons along with several NATO countries.

The people in Socorro had no idea that the daily explosions that send black clouds of radioactive smoke over the community that had begun in 1972 were from open air testing of uranium weapons.

I began a speaking tour in the United States and Europe meeting many other individuals looking for solutions to this problem. Several of us decided that an International coalition to ban these weapons was needed.

One of the people I met in my travels was Fons Vandeputte from Berlaar, Belgium, who offered the use of his beautiful home to hold our organizing conference.

On October 13, 2003 grassroots organizations and experts in several disciplines met and launched an international campaign to ban the military use of uranium weapons. These individuals represented fifteen organizations from the United Kingdom, Japan, United States, Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. Thus the International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons (ICBUW) became a reality

Today, ICBUW is recognized as a global leader in the efforts to ban uranium weapons and encourages and supports direct action, campaigns and the formation of national coalitions to inform and educate the public regarding uranium weapons, its properties, use, and impact on human health and the environment. And above all a universal ban.

Damacio Lopez - November 6, 2024

International Uranium Film Festival (IUFF)

Dear ICBUW Team!

Our warmest congratulations for the 20th anniversary of ICBUW. From the very beginning, the International Uranium Film Festival has been intertwined with ICBUW. One of the first films to win an award of the Uranium Film Festival in Rio de Janeiro in 2011 was a short film about DU starring Damacio Lopez who had been present in Rio together with Isabel Macdonald.

And since 2012, Manfred Mohr and ICBUW Germany have been successful partners of the Uranium Film Festival in Berlin. And in September 2013, when the Uranium Film Festival was organized in Munich in partnership with the NFFA, Claus Biegert, and Manfred Mohr of the German DU campaign, the festival was also present at the founding of “ICBUW Germany” on September 28, 2013 in Munich.

Warm greetings to Munich. Wish we could be there!

Marcia and Norbert, Rio

www.uraniumfilmfestival.org

Veterans For Peace

To ICBUW on your 20th anniversary

We at the Veterans For Peace, Uranium Weapons, Cluster Bombs and Land Mines Working Group congratulate you. We too believe that the use of uranium weapons is already prohibited by existing international laws, we nevertheless believe that we need to establish an explicit and comprehensive prohibition of production, possession, sale and use. The facts that such weapons are in active use in battlefields despite existing Humanitarian laws and that warnings supported by independent scientific research has been raised indicate the need to address the issue clearly and directly leaving no doubt. Our working group is on the verge of launching a public awareness campaign on the need to ban uranium weapons. In closing we sincerely appreciate the lead ICBUW has taken to abolish this weapon. VFP welcomes our new collaboration with ICBUW. With kind regards

VFP Uranium Weapons, Cluster Bombs and Land Mines Working Group