

Mines Action Canada

General Statement

Under agenda point 11

Thank you Chair. For more than two decades, Mines Action Canada has seen that CCW has the potential to create new international law but too often this body has lacked ambition and allowed a few states to hinder progress.

In 2019, my colleague spoke to the Meeting of High Contracting Parties and reminded you that we do not have the time to continue wandering aimlessly through the diplomatic woods unable to see the forest for the trees. She called on CCW to live up to its potential and to undertake real action to protect people from indiscriminate weapons. Two years later, we are still lost in the woods and I am here to reiterate that call.

We echo the calls by Human Rights Watch for high contracting parties to insist on dedicated time to discuss the adequacy of Protocol III. Incendiary weapons cause horrific injuries. This body should be listening to the health care providers and burn survivor groups who are calling on you to strengthen international law. The only possible response to the pain and suffering caused by these weapons is to strengthen the protocol and close its loopholes. We cannot stand idly by any longer.

On autonomous weapons systems, the CCW has not lived up to its potential. We welcome the Belgian chair's work which provided a vision of what a framework on autonomous weapon systems could look like but unfortunately that way forward has been blocked. The inability of the GGE to adopt a substantial report last week indicates that the CCW is not fit for purpose despite constant assertions that this is the appropriate venue for these discussions. A small number of states has thus far blocked progress, subverted the will of the majority and acted counter the desires of the general public around the world.

This failure is even more unfortunate as this Convention showed its ability to address concerns on emerging technologies in 1994. Protocol IV is a positive example how the CCW preemptively prohibited an inhumane weapon in development, namely blinding laser weapons. Protocol IV has had no negative impact on commercial and civilian use of laser technologies, but it has prevented unnecessary and inhumane injuries to both combatants and civilians.

This week the CCW Review Conference can prove it is fit for purpose or it can allow a handful of states to block "The Way Forward." As a co-founder of Stop Killer Robots, we call on you to adopt a new CCW mandate to negotiate a legally binding instrument to maintain meaningful human control over the use of force.

Finally, recognizing the importance of gender and diversity considerations in effective mine action operations, we call on High Contracting Parties to fully integrate gender and diversity discussions into work under APII and ProtV.

The choices you make here this week will choose a path for the next five years. So we ask again, will you take a direct route towards peace and disarmament or will you continue to aimlessly wander through the diplomatic woods?