Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects

15 November 2024

Original: English and French
English and French only

Geneva, 13-15 November 2024
Agenda item 7
General exchange of views

Working Paper*

Submitted by France

1. France is fully committed to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), which is an essential instrument of international humanitarian law and an inclusive forum, bringing together complementary expertise.

I. Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems

2. France believes that the best chance of obtaining an effective international framework for the development and use of autonomous weapon systems that respects international humanitarian law lies in pursuing to its conclusion the process started in this forum to establish such a framework. The CCW remains the most appropriate forum for addressing the legal and ethical issues raised by weapons systems based on emerging technologies in the field of LAWS. Above all, it is the only forum in which it is possible to propose measures that are universally accepted and therefore implemented by States likely to develop LAWS. In response to the expectations expressed by the United Nations Secretary-General, France will work diligently to ensure that the GGE fulfills its mandate as soon as possible.

3. To guide our discussions within this framework, France considers that the two-tier approach should continue to structure the debates, as recognized by many States in the UNSG report. This two-tier approach enables us to cover all the issues at stake. Respect for IHL, which lies at the heart of our GGE's mandate, and the maintenance of human control are its foundations. It should also serve as a basis for defining the set of elements of a possible operational and normative framework applicable to LAWS. France considers that States should undertake to renounce and prohibit lethal autonomous weapon systems that cannot be used in accordance with international humanitarian law. In France's view, these would be systems that act without any form of human subordination: these are what we call “fully” autonomous systems. With regard to other autonomous weapon systems, we believe that the challenges posed are of a different nature and do not call for a ban, but for the implementation of national measures to support their development and use, in order to ensure that IHL is fully respected.

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

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II. Amended Protocol II

4. The work carried out within the framework of Amended Protocol II on Improvised Explosive Devices has enabled States to mobilize around this major threat. France hopes that States will remain mobilized to combat this threat.

5. The French armed forces are particularly involved in the fight against IEDs. The “Pôle interarmées de traitement du danger lié aux munitions et explosifs – PIAM”, a joint team dealing with ammunition and explosives hazards, sends instructors to various countries to give courses in a “train the trainer” format, enabling local officers to acquire knowledge in the field, which they can then pass on to others. These courses have been run in Benin, Lebanon or Cambodia, for example. PIAM is also involved in revising UN documents such as “IED Threat Mitigation Handbook” and “UN EOD Unit Manual ”.

6. France funds several French and international NGOs involved in the fight against IEDs, in Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Syria, Chad and Togo. Research is also crucial in the fight against IEDs. France provides financial support to several organizations, such as UNIDIR, the Small Arms Survey and Conflict Armament Research.

III. Protocol V

7. France is firmly committed to the implementation and universalization of Protocol V, and is pursuing ambitious action to combat explosive remnants of war and assist victims.

8. The French armed forces have drawn up instructions and implemented operating procedures to record, as much as possible and wherever possible, data relating to explosive ordnance used or abandoned, in order to facilitate the destruction or neutralization of unexploded ordnance after an armed conflict. Military demining teams are also deployed when land forces are deployed in combat zones. Where conditions allow, French specialists work in collaboration with local teams, sharing the experience they have acquired over many years in various fields. In this way, France has been able to provide military specialists in Iraq, Jordan, Senegal, Gabon and Côte d'Ivoire.

9. France is also involved in a number of specific assistance programs for countries facing the threat of explosive remnants of war. France supports the Regional School for Humanitarian Demining in Lebanon (ERDHL) and its “Five Schools” project, implemented in five training centers in the Middle East and Africa. France is also taking action against explosive remnants of war in Benin, by funding the Center for Advanced Training in Post-Conflict Mine Clearance and Decontamination (Centre de perfectionnement aux actions post-conflictuelles de déminage et de dépollution - CPADD). France also organizes training courses for foreign trainees at the Angers engineering school. Trainers from the Angers engineering school also travel internationally to contribute to training courses, as they did in Cambodia in 2022 and 2023.