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

English only

Geneva, 13-15 November 2024
Agenda item 14
Status of implementation of and compliance with the Convention and its Protocols

Obstacles to the Implementation of the CCW: Ukraine's perspective*

Submitted by Ukraine

1. We profoundly regret that the destructive position of the Russian Federation during the 18th Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V and 26th Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II as well as at this Meeting prevent the High Contracting Parties from having substantial discussions on the implementation of this important international instruments. Russia's attempts to manipulate and misuse the rules of procedure with regard to participation of observers or broadcasting the meetings reveal Russia`s tremendous fear that its widespread violations of humanitarian law, the UN Charter, and its obligations under CCW and its Protocols will again be exposed in this forum.

2. Ukraine acknowledges the significant role of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) in protecting civilian lives amid hostilities. This Convention establishes essential international norms and fosters collaboration among High Contracting Parties to mitigate the risks posed by explosive remnants of war.

3. Regular meetings of High Contracting Parties offer valuable opportunities to reinforce the Convention's relevance within global disarmament framework, which has been severely undermined by Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine. Since the beginning of its aggression, the Russian Federation has deployed a range of weapons that are explicitly restricted or prohibited under CCW and international humanitarian law. These include indiscriminately used landmines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), booby traps, and incendiary weapons—all of which have inflicted immense suffering on Ukrainian civilians and contaminated vast areas of our land. This harm continues to escalate. In recent months, Russia's aerial attacks on Ukrainian cities with missiles, drones, and bombs have intensified, further contaminating our territory. From September to November 2024, in blatant violation of Protocol II, Russian forces used drones to deploy lethal PFM-1 "Butterfly" mines in civilian areas of recently liberated regions, causing devastating injuries, including six incidents last month in Kherson.

4. Russia's relentless assaults are a daily nightmare for the people of Ukraine. Just days ago, Russian strikes on Zaporizhzhia and Mykolayiv claimed six civilian lives and left over 20 others injured, including five children. On 11 November, a missile strike in Kryvyi Rih killed a mother and her three children. These are not isolated incidents but part of a deliberate campaign that flagrantly violates the very conventions we, as a disarmament community, have committed to uphold.

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5. Ukrainian deminers have documented 746 incidents involving explosive devices left behind by Russian forces, resulting in over 1,000 civilian casualties, including 102 children. Among the survivors, 266 civilians face lifelong trauma and require prosthetics and rehabilitation. Millions of Ukrainians, especially children, remain at constant risk from these devices, which continue to claim lives and cause lasting harm.

6. In response to these challenges, Ukraine's demining teams, with international technical and financial support, have worked tirelessly to ensure civilian safety. To date, nearly 874,000 explosive devices have been located, secured and destroyed in liberated areas, with approximately 29.4 sq. km. cleared. This progress was possible due to the dedicated work of 64 mine action operators, including government, international, and commercial partners, all employing the latest demining technologies.

7. At the Ukraine Mine Action Conference (UMAC-2024), held in Lausanne in October this year, over 60 countries reaffirmed their commitment to supporting Ukraine's demining efforts. Ukraine deeply appreciates the international community's support and assistance in mine clearance, risk education, and victim assistance.

8. Ukraine urges the international community to stand united in upholding the integrity of international agreements such as the CCW and its Protocols. Acts of aggression, violations of state sovereignty and territorial integrity and disruptions to vital treaty-related decisions undermine the very foundation of these international instruments. Now, more than ever, the world must respond firmly to any attempts to destabilize these frameworks.

9. Finally, Ukraine emphasizes the critical need for accountability in addressing breaches of this Convention. We urge the international community to press for an immediate cessation of hostilities by Russia to prevent further civilian suffering and reduce land contamination. Russia must be held accountable for its flagrant violations of international law and the devastation it has caused in Ukraine.