

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

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General exchange of views

Working paper

Submitted by the European Union, Albania, Georgia, Iceland, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine *

1. In the run up to the Seventh Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) in 2026, the EU recalls that the CCW and its Protocols are an essential and integral part of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), and reiterates its commitment to respect and comply fully with IHL. We call upon all States that have not yet done so to join the CCW and its Protocols without further delay. The EU continues to fully implement the EU Guidelines on promoting compliance with IHL.
2. The EU actively supports the work of the International Criminal Court and measures to ensure accountability for the most serious international crimes including war crimes, crimes against humanity and crimes of genocide. There can be no impunity for these crimes.
3. The CCW is a unique international forum gathering diplomatic, legal and military expertise. In light of the particular challenges of weapons deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects, this expertise has previously led to the adoption of prohibitions or restrictions on the use of specific weapons, such as incendiary weapons, as codified in Protocol III, as well as to prohibitions on the use of specific weapons such as reflected in Protocol IV on blinding laser weapons. This makes it an appropriate forum to respond to fast-paced developments in the field of weapons technology, thus contributing to preventing and reducing the suffering of both civilians and combatants.
4. In addition, we stress the importance of transparency and confidence building in the implementation of the CCW and its Protocols and encourage High Contracting Parties to implement their legal, national reporting and technical obligations, to improve the rate and quality of their national reporting, and engage in further discussion on national implementation. We are also fully committed to mainstreaming a gender perspective into all disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control efforts, including by promoting women's full, equal and meaningful participation in the CCW and other disarmament fora.
5. The EU welcomes the work by the Group of Governmental Experts on emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems (GGE LAWS) and acknowledges the substantial progress made. It is essential that High Contracting Parties, including major military powers, continue to engage constructively in these discussions. The EU emphasises that context-appropriate human judgment and control must be retained over LAWS and that human beings must remain accountable for decisions over the use of force, in order to ensure compliance with international law, in particular IHL, and relevant ethical considerations and it recalls its support for the two-tier approach. The EU underlines that the

* The present document was submitted after the deadline in order to reflect the most recent information.



CCW is the relevant international forum in this regard and we expect it to deliver concrete results by the end of 2026, not least given ongoing rapid developments in this area. We will spare no effort in working towards the fulfilment of the mandate of the GGE LAWS and assure the Chair of the GGE of our full support in this endeavour.

6. The EU remains deeply concerned about the continued severe global impact of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and their indiscriminate use and effects, in particular in the perpetration of terrorist acts and the use of IEDs by non-state actors.

7. Furthermore, the EU needs to highlight once again the humanitarian impact and the severe consequences on social and economic development caused by the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of Mines Other Than Anti-Personnel Mines (MOTAPM). While acknowledging that MOTAPM are legitimate weapons, Parties are obliged to ensure that they are used in accordance with IHL, including by taking all feasible precautions, to protect civilians from the effects of these weapons. The EU urges States Parties to further discuss how to ensure compliance with Amended Protocol II, also with respect to MOTAPM, and therefore calls for MOTAPM to remain on the CCW agenda in order to ensure that High Contracting Parties can continue to consider the matter in a constructive and transparent manner. Thus, we regret that a few countries, including the Russian Federation, decided to block such discussions in previous years.

8. The EU remains concerned about and condemns the use of incendiary weapons against civilians or targets located within a concentration of civilians, with their indiscriminate use causing cruel effects and unacceptable suffering. We regret that Protocol III issues were removed from the CCW agenda because of the opposition by Russia and we request to have them back next year, since a structured debate on the implementation of the Convention should occur on all of its protocols. We also call on all States not yet party to join Protocol III of the Convention, which prohibits in all circumstances to make the civilian population as such, individual civilians or civilian objects the object of attack by incendiary weapons and we urge all States to fully comply with its provisions.

9. Russia's unjustifiable and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine is an affront to everything we work for here. It is not only a blatant violation of international law, including the UN Charter and IHL, and Russia's obligations under the CCW and several of its protocols, but also a humanitarian catastrophe for Ukraine and its people. We condemn in the strongest possible terms Russia's use of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions as well as the use of other explosive weapons, such as rockets, artillery shells and IEDs directed against civilians in Ukraine. Despite sustained US and European diplomatic efforts towards peace and Ukraine's readiness to pursue it, Russia has increased the intensity of its indiscriminate strikes on Ukraine, particularly targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, thus demonstrating Russia's lack of real political will to end its war of aggression and to engage in meaningful peace negotiations. The EU again urges Russia to agree to a full, unconditional and immediate ceasefire, which Ukraine agreed to in March 2025, and reiterates the European Union's support for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine based on the principles of the UN Charter and international law. We remain committed to seeing Russia and its leadership held fully accountable for waging a war of aggression against Ukraine and for other most serious crimes under international law, as well as for the massive damage caused by its war.

10. As regards the situation in the Middle East, International Humanitarian Law must be respected by all parties, and the EU recalls the need to fully implement the International Court of Justice orders. The EU deplores the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, the unacceptable number of civilian casualties and the levels of starvation. The EU welcomes the agreement on the first phase of the Comprehensive Plan to end the Gaza Conflict put forward by President Trump, as well as the outcome of the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit for Peace held on 13 October 2025. The EU has consistently supported diplomatic efforts led by the US and the role played by the regional mediators in this regard to secure an immediate ceasefire and the release of all hostages. We call on all parties to fully implement the agreement without delay, allowing for the establishment of a lasting ceasefire and the unimpeded access and sustained distribution of humanitarian assistance at scale into and throughout Gaza, and for the UN and its agencies, and humanitarian organisations, to be able to work independently and impartially. This is a real chance to end the devastating war and the human suffering, and

to forge a credible political path towards lasting peace and security, based on the two-state solution.
