

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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Item 11 of the provisional agenda

Emerging Issues in the context of the objectives and purposes of the Convention

Working paper

Submitted by Austria

1. The possibility to discuss emerging issues in the context of the objectives and purposes of the Convention and how they may be addressed under the Convention is a key feature of the CCW and widely appreciated. Despite the prominent discussions in the GGE on LAWS it remains underused when it comes to other emerging issues and technologies. We would therefore like to share some thoughts in this regard and suggest a way to reinvigorate discussions through a concrete tasking of the ISU ahead of the Seventh Review Conference taking place in 2026.
2. The CCW as a framework convention by design offers the opportunity to develop additional protocols and in its preambular part reaffirms the need to continue the codification and progressive development of the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict.
3. Since 2013 the issue of lethal autonomous weapons systems is discussed within the framework of the CCW. This clearly is one of the most pressing issues with regard to new technologies in the military domain, but at the same time current technological progress is not limited to autonomy in weapons systems. Science and technology have made significant progress in many fields and while our societies have greatly benefitted from these developments there is also the inherent risk for their use in armed conflict in ways that are not in line with the objectives of our convention.
4. The 2016 Review Conference in its outcome document acknowledged “the key role of the Convention in monitoring ongoing and new developments in weapons, means and methods of war that may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects, and in related science and technology, with a view to ensuring the continued relevance, integrity and adequacy of the Convention.” A related decision by the Review Conference and a discussion on S&T issues during the 2017 Meeting of High Contracting Parties led to the establishment to a dedicated agenda item on “emerging issues”.
5. In 2018 Switzerland and India had presented a working paper to the Meeting of High Contracting Parties (MHCP), which outlined the importance to keep track of Science and Technology in the military domain, to make use of the possibilities the CCW has to offer and suggesting a mapping of developments in science and technology. We believe the idea still to be worthwhile.
6. The CCW offers a flexible way to react to new developments in armed conflicts, in weapon technologies and in the way they are used. It is our belief that High Contracting Parties should make the best use of the CCW and its strengths. In this we need to build up on previous discussions and make use of existing capacities.
7. In order to achieve a better understanding among High Contracting Parties on current and future developments of relevance we would like to suggest to task the Implementation Support Unit with preparing an assessment of possible areas of work in the framework of our



convention in the form of a conference room paper for the benefit of the Seventh Review Conference to be held in 2026 and its Preparatory Committee.

8. The purpose of such an assessment would be to create awareness about relevant developments, inform our discussions at the Review Conference and under the recurring agenda item of the MHCP. It would help High Contracting Parties in identifying possible areas of work in the medium and long-term. Examples of relevant technologies could be found within the fields of military uses related to neurotechnology, nanotechnology, acoustics or directed energy. But areas of work could also include weapons systems which have been discussed by our predecessors during the conception of the CCW and in previous years.

9. We are interested in the views of other High Contracting Parties on such a proposal and stand ready to provide concrete language.
