

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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English only

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Item 7 of the provisional agenda

General exchange of views

Working paper

Submitted by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)^{*, 1}

1. Internationally agreed limits on weapons based on a shared recognition of their unacceptable humanitarian consequences are integral to preserving a measure of humanity in war. And yet, in war zones around the world, the sanctity of hospitals is disregarded. Humanitarian access is impeded. Enemy fighters and civilian populations are dehumanized.
2. As a result, people who should be protected from the effects of armed conflict suffer intolerably. Unbearable human tragedy is unfolding in front of our eyes. Notwithstanding many instances of respect for IHL, compliance clearly falls short of what is required.
3. Parties to armed conflicts continue to routinely bomb and shell towns and cities, despite overwhelming evidence of the immense destruction it causes, and often in disregard of key principles and rules of IHL. The ICRC and the entire Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement call on all States and parties to armed conflict to avoid the use of heavy explosive weapons in populated areas. We underscore the enduring relevance of the [2022 Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas](#) as the first instrument through which States committed to curb their use. The Political Declaration aligns with the objectives of the CCW as both instruments are based on the principle of the protection of the civilian population against the effects of hostilities. We therefore call on all states and in particular the CCW High Contracting Parties to endorse it. The Second International Conference of the Political Declaration will take place in San Jose, Costa Rica, from 18-20 November 2025, where we will look forward to states reaffirming their commitment towards the protection of civilians during urban warfare.
4. Weapons with incendiary effects, including the incendiary weapons governed by Protocol III, continue to inflict horrific wounds and set civilian infrastructure and property alight. High Contracting Parties, the ICRC and others have raised this ongoing humanitarian concern for many years. We urge the High Contracting Parties to provide a dedicated space for in-depth discussion of the humanitarian impacts of weapons with incendiary effects and Protocol III.
5. Landmines are another explosive weapon of concern. Civilian casualties from manufactured and improvised landmines have spiked dramatically in recent years. The humanitarian concerns and the indiscriminate effects of these weapons cannot be ignored or downplayed. Even when initially placed on frontlines, they inevitably kill and maim the very people they were meant to protect before they are eventually cleared at astronomical cost.

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

¹ Working paper submitted in lieu of a statement to the general debate.



We urge all those who continue to use anti-personnel mines to cease immediately. Landmines, booby-traps and other devices continue to inflict grave suffering on civilians, impede access to healthcare facilities and other essential services, and hamper humanitarian operations. Even once the fighting has ended, these weapons leave behind long-term explosive hazards that impede the safe return of displaced populations and hinder reconstruction and development. We therefore call on all who use other types of landmines, booby-traps or ‘other devices’ to strictly comply with the requirements of Amended Protocol II and its annex. We urge all those who use anti-vehicle mines to significantly step up their efforts to protect civilians. Concrete future work is needed to effectively address the well documented harm they cause, and we support calls for focused discussions on anti-vehicle mines.

6. Autonomous weapon systems entail the loss of human control and judgement in the use of force, bringing risks for civilians, challenges for IHL compliance and fundamental ethical concerns for humanity. The increasing use of autonomous weapon systems on the battlefield highlights the urgency of addressing the risks they pose. The ICRC welcomes the significant progress made in the GGE LAWS this year, and shares the [joint assessment of 39 High Contracting Parties](#) that the GGE Chair’s rolling text is sufficiently developed to form the basis of negotiations on an instrument. We urge High Contracting Parties to commence such negotiations on a legally binding instrument as soon as possible in 2026.

7. Universalizing the CCW and its Protocols remains critical. We congratulate Trinidad and Tobago whose accession came into effect in January 2025 for joining the Convention. We call on States that have not yet done so to join the CCW and all its Protocols without delay.

8. The ICRC played an important role in developing the CCW and its Protocols and, together with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, we will continue to support their universalization and full implementation.
