



Statement of the Republic of Croatia under Agenda Item 7: General exchange of views

Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

Geneva, 21 - 23 November 2018

Mr. President,

At the outset, let me congratulate you on your appointment as the 2018 Chair of the CCW and assure you of Croatia's full cooperation in your work. Again, for us it is important and welcomed to see the representative of a fellow European Union Member State presiding over such an important conference. Our thanks also goes to Madam Anja Kaspersen, Director of the UNODA Geneva Branch, and her team, for the preparation of this event.

Croatia aligns itself with the EU statement, and would like to highlight the following issues from the national position.

As we all know, the adoption of the CCW was based on a desire to enhance the actual protection against the effects caused by certain specific weapons. This remains the aim and purpose of the CCW to this day. Croatia was always firmly committed to the CCW and all its Protocols, which we see as an essential instrument of the international humanitarian law (IHL). We therefore invite all High Contracting Parties (HCPs) to the CCW to remain committed to the implementation of this Convention and its Protocols. We believe that our focus should stay on the compliance with the obligations we have agreed to take upon us by further demonstrating the political will and mobilizing resources necessary to implement these obligations in the bid to achieve clear and tangible results.

Mr. President,

Croatia supports the ongoing and direct engagement between HCPs and international organizations and institutions, as well as civil society and NGOs, especially global Campaign to Ban Killer Robots, in pondering new and far-reaching instruments of the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) that could alleviate human casualties in the future. In this regard, we warmly welcome the work and results of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS), under the able leadership of Ambassador Amandeep Singh Gill of India. Because of

the sustained efforts exerted by the Chairperson of the GGE and joint determination of the entire CCW community to approach issues of priority head-on, it is our belief that this was truly a landmark year in which significant strides were made that could add immeasurably to the global security architecture. At the same time, we reiterate our position that fundamental questions of life and death cannot be assigned to armed autonomous weapons systems, having in mind the lack of accountability that would exist for the unlawful harm caused by such weapons. Let us not forget that even though humans have proved to be capable of doing the worst things to each other, especially in times of war and armed conflict, it is our inherent nature that allows us to evolve both morally and ethically in a way machines will never be able. Against this backdrop, we support the continuation of the GGE's work in 2019 on the lines of the agreed Guiding Principles.

Regarding Mines Other Than Anti-Personnel Mines (MOTAPM), Croatia shares the concern of many HCPs about the humanitarian and developmental impact of these mines. At the same time, we welcome the substantial progress made within the CCW in addressing the humanitarian risks posed by MOTAPM. Here we note with appreciation the global report on anti-vehicle mine (AVM) incidents jointly made by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Since it is quite clear that after two rounds of informal consultations held on this matter only in this year, we are still seeking for the appropriate balance between humanitarian concerns and military considerations, Croatia is of the opinion that we should continue further expert discussions on MOTAPM within the framework of the CCW, preferably as a stand-alone agenda item at the Meeting of HCPs. Difficulties in reaching common ground should not itself be a barrier to making serious attempts for improving international law restrictions on weapons such as MOTAPM; it should actually stimulate us to search for solutions that will ultimately reduce the humanitarian risks associated with MOTAPM. We are also grateful to Ireland for its longstanding expert leadership in this matter.

We recognize the calls for a further discussion on the issue of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and subsequent harm to civilian populations. We particularly welcome working paper submitted by Germany in this regard, which provides substantive insights into this matter.

Concerning incendiary weapons, which are regulated by Protocol III of the CCW, we agree with all those who feel that the time is right to discuss the relevance of standards set by Protocol III, to evaluate its implementation and to analyze whether the provisions of the Protocol, in view of the passing of time and the developments in technology, still offer appropriate protection from the impact of weapons with incendiary effects, in particular for civilians and civilian infrastructure, as well as for combatants. As in the case of MOTAPM, nobody disputes the fact that the use of incendiary weapons is not prohibited (at least not entirely). Rather, it is the issue of balance between legitimate military considerations and humanitarian concerns.

Because of the harm these weapons cause when used indiscriminately, and notwithstanding the military utility of the said weapons to armed forces of some states, we deem it beneficial if this forum explores ways to address observed shortcomings of Protocol III that arise from the challenges in implementation, universalization, technological advancements and evolution of the provisions of IHL. We particularly acknowledge the work of the Human Rights Watch (HRW) who has spearheaded efforts in this regard and provided the international community with a wealth of information on gruesome effects of incendiary weapons on victims.

As for the financial issues, we note with great appreciation your personal efforts, Mr. President, and those of UNODA, aimed at securing the financial sustainability of the CCW by adopting measures, which will bring greater clarity and stability to the Convention's budget process and further encourage full payment of dues, allowing us to continue with our substantive work. Along these lines, Croatia is pleased to have been able to again contribute to the CCW Sponsorship Program which is a crucial tool for ensuring broader participation of states and experts and diversity of perspectives in the meetings.

Mr. President,

CCW has always been seen as a forum for open-minded discussions and exchange of views on conventional weapons at the multilateral level. That said, Croatia considers participation of civil society, NGOs, academia and industry in the work of the CCW as a welcome supplement to the overall CCW framework. We acknowledge their important support role to HCPs in our joint effort to maintain the CCW as an effective and dynamic arms control instrument. Furthermore, Croatia attaches special importance to the calls to ensure gender diversity in deliberations relating to disarmament, peace and security discussions by engaging and including female experts.

Thank you.