



ICRC

**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 (CCW)**

21-23 November 2018

General statement of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

Thank you Mr. Chairperson,

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) remains a fundamental instrument to reaffirm, and where needed, to strengthen international humanitarian law's limits on armed conflict, by seeking to protect civilians from indiscriminate means of warfare and combatants from weapons of a nature to cause excessive suffering.

With 125 States now party to the CCW, there remains much work to be done towards universalization of the Convention. The ICRC urges adherence to the Convention and its five Protocols by all States that have not yet done so.

The ICRC continues to promote CCW universalization and implementation.

For this purpose, in December 2017, the ICRC and the Indian Society of International Law, together with the Ministry of External Affairs of the government of India, co-organized an international conference in New Delhi. The conference was attended by representatives of 24 States from South Asia, East Asia, the Persian Gulf and East Africa. The report of this conference is now available.

In addition, just this past week in Tehran, together with the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the ICRC convened the 8th South Asian Regional Conference on International Humanitarian Law, which included a session on conventional weapons and the CCW. The conference gathered representatives of nine States of South Asia.

Mr. Chairperson,

The ICRC will speak in more detail under the agenda items on "Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems", Protocol III, Emerging Issues (in particular on explosive weapons in populated areas and on science and technology) and on other matters (mines other than anti-personnel mines). For now, we wish to make a few brief remarks on autonomous weapons and on explosive weapons in populated areas.

On **autonomous weapon systems**, the ICRC welcomes the progress made by the High Contracting Parties in the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems to address the legal questions and ethical concerns raised by autonomous weapon systems. The ICRC welcomes in particular the Report of the 2018 GGE (CCW/GGE.1/2018/CRP.1), in particular Part IV on 'Emerging Commonalities, Conclusions and Recommendations' and the Chairperson's helpful summary of the discussions in Annex III.

As set out in its Working Paper (WP3) to this meeting – ‘The Element of Human Control’ – the ICRC recommends that the work of the GGE in 2019 be focused on reaching common understandings on the elements and criteria of human control over the critical functions of weapon systems that are needed for compliance with international law and ethical acceptability, building on the general agreement that “human responsibility for decisions on the use of weapon systems must be retained”. This should be reflected explicitly in the GGE’s mandate.

On **explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA)**, the ICRC continues to call on States and parties to armed conflict to avoid the use of explosive weapons with a wide impact area in densely populated areas, due to the significant likelihood of indiscriminate effects. We welcome the efforts of States, the UN and civil society organizations to bring attention to this important humanitarian issue and to address it through different means. In particular, we commend Germany for its ‘EWIPA Talks’ initiative to raise awareness and identify good practices to protect civilians. The ICRC was pleased to contribute to this initiative. The outcome of these discussions are summarized in Working Paper (WP1) submitted by Germany to this meeting. Further, the ICRC welcomes continued efforts, led by Austria, Ireland and others, towards a political declaration to address the humanitarian consequences of EWIPA. We look forward to further exchanges on this topic under the agenda item ‘Emerging Issues’.

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.