



Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

Meeting of High Contracting Parties

General Exchange of Views

Statement by Mr Ian McConville, Chargé, Australian Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva

14 November 2013

Mr President,

As I take the floor for the first time, I congratulate you on your appointment to this important role and assure you of Australia's full cooperation in your stewardship of our discussions this week.

We are of course pleased to be part of this Meeting of High Contracting Parties and look forward to concrete progress on advancing ongoing and future new topics.

Mr President,

Australia has had a long-standing commitment to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its humanitarian aims. We continue to be supportive of all five protocols as well as the amendments to the Convention and Amended Protocol II.

Australia recognises that the universality of the CCW needs to be promoted for the effectiveness and success of the Convention and its Protocols. This Convention affords important protections to armed forces and civilian populations affected by armed conflict that all countries should recognise.

Australia urges those States not yet party to the CCW to consider ratifying or acceding to the CCW and its Protocols in the near future. We also encourage those High Contracting Parties that have not yet accepted all of the Convention's Protocols to do so. The Protocols provide the substance of the Convention's aspirations and are a valuable contribution to preventing harm to civilians after hostilities have ceased.

While we recognise the achievement in having 117 High Contracting Parties to the Convention, there is still considerable scope for further work to achieve universalisation.

In promoting the CCW and its Protocols in our own region, Australia has provided funding and technical expertise to the Pacific Islands Forum-hosted Regional Meeting on the Implementation of Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) in June this year. This Forum progressed regional UXO

strategies to mobilise and coordinate efforts to address the problems caused by UXO and other explosive remnant of war (ERW) in the Pacific.

Australia also continues to be a financial contributor to the CCW sponsorship program. The program remains a valuable tool to promote the goals of the CCW, enhance universalisation and assist its effective implementation.

Mr President

As we have now reached 30 years since the CCW's entry into force, States Parties to the CCW will need to ensure that the Convention is able to fulfill its mandate to prohibit or restrict the use of those weapons that are excessively injurious or have indiscriminate effects.

The CCW needs to continue to demonstrate its relevance as a key instrument of international humanitarian law that can remain responsive to advancements in weapons technology and take into account developments in the nature and conduct of armed conflict.

This meeting is, therefore, an opportunity to consider what future work the States Parties should embark upon in 2014 and beyond.

Yesterday, Australia presented its report and recommendations as the Coordinator on IEDs under Amended Protocol II and strongly supports continued work on this important topic. We also take this opportunity to again thank the Co-Coordinator, Switzerland, for their considerable efforts in working constructively with Australia to progress the issue of IEDs under APII.

We hope that High Contracting Parties here today, who are affected by IEDs or moved by the plight of those civilians which are affected, continue to support exploring further work on IEDs within the CCW APII framework in 2014 and beyond.

In recent months, there has been much discussion also on the topic of lethal fully autonomous weapons systems and in particular the application of existing international humanitarian law to the potential development of such weapons systems. We would support a further informal exploratory discussion under the CCW framework on this topic to allow states to develop a more informed understanding on the definition, military utility, legal as well as humanitarian aspects associated with lethal autonomous weapons systems. I congratulate France's work to support engagement on this.

Mr President

The CCW remains an important – if not exclusive – tool for elaborating IHL rules on weapons that are excessively injurious or have indiscriminate effects.

Through regularly strengthening of the Convention and its Protocols, and by ensuring our associated work is meaningful and productive, we have the opportunity to maintain the CCW as a relevant and robust IHL and arms control instrument, now and well into the future.

I thank you, Mr President.