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

General Exchange of Views

14 November 2013



**Statement by
AUSTRIA**

Mr. Karl Prummer

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to the United Nations in Geneva**

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset allow me to congratulate you for your assumption of the role as President of this Conference and assure you of the full support of my delegation. Austria associates herself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union during this debate.

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which encompasses prohibitions and regulations to deal with weapons which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects, makes an important contribution to international humanitarian law, to the prevention of human suffering and to the protection of civilians. As High Contracting Parties we are responsible to keep this legal framework relevant and responsive to any new developments. Let me in the following highlight a few considerations of my delegation in this regard.

We underline the relevance of the regular meetings of High Contracting Parties to the Convention and its Protocols for monitoring and ensuring the effective implementation of its provisions. These meetings should be focused on compliance, regular transparency reporting, the exchange and development of good practices as well as cooperation and assistance, while responding effectively to the needs and challenges in the implementation on the ground.

Austria had the privilege to serve as Coordinator and Friend of the Coordinator on Victim Assistance under Protocol V for several years until the Seventh Conference and has focused its efforts at strengthening the effective implementation of the obligations for victim assistance under Protocol V. As Coordinator, Austria inter alia assisted the adoption of a Plan of Action on Victim Assistance and of a reporting form for victim assistance under Protocol V. We are confident that these tools will continuously be used by High Contracting Parties and other stakeholders in a practical way.

We welcome the work that has been undertaken under Amended Protocol II, guided by the coordinators for improvised explosive devices, who have encouraged High Contracting Parties of this Protocol to consider the Plan of Action on Victim Assistance as a tool to guide their work in assisting IED-victims in an effective way that meets the rights and needs of victims. We are also pleased that High Contracting Parties increasingly emphasize the need for enhancing practical cooperation between Protocol V of the Convention and related international legal instruments of relevance for victim assistance, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as a way to maximize the chances of some of the most vulnerable parts of society for their rights to be ensured.

In addition to full and effective implementation of the Convention and its Protocols, we need to stay responsive to new findings and developments regarding conventional weapons which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have

indiscriminate effects and discuss such issues openly in the framework of this Convention. We have heard repeated calls from civil society and some states to take a closer look at Protocol III on incendiary weapons and its implementation in the light of current challenges, and we believe it is important to continue these discussions. In this context, we appreciate the side event organized by Human Rights Watch earlier this week, which has revealed disturbing evidence on the use of incendiary weapons in the current conflict in Syria and has raised serious questions on the application of international humanitarian law.

We also need to keep up with emerging technological developments in the area of conventional weapons and make sure that we consider the implications of these developments for international law at an early stage. In this light, we commend you, Mr. President for your timely initiative to propose a mandate for an informal meeting of experts to discuss questions related to emerging technologies in the area of autonomous weapons systems. Austria has at various occasions expressed her support for the relevant UN fora to deal with this issue with a sense of urgency and has called for a multi-disciplinary approach. We would welcome an informal expert meeting in the framework of the CCW and support the mandate proposed by the Presidency, which should allow us to consider the broad range of aspects related to the emerging technologies in the field of autonomous weapons systems, including legal, technical, ethical and societal aspects. We also support the approach outlined by the Presidency for the informal Meeting of Experts to be inclusive of the broad range of expertise available from states, international organizations and civil society.

Finally, Mr. President, we heed the call by the UN Secretary General to consider the concrete steps that can be taken to reduce the humanitarian impact of explosive weapons in populated areas. We welcome the informal briefing by the “International Network on Explosive Weapons” (INEW) to interested High Contracting Parties of Protocol V that took place earlier this week, which focused on the indiscriminate harm and the suffering caused by the wide-spread use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas, with the great majority of victims being civilians. We should make more use of similar occasions and benefit from the presence of a wide range of experts in order to stimulate discussions and move forward with addressing the concrete steps that the UN Secretary General has called for.

I thank you.