



Permanent Mission of Italy
UN - Geneva

**Amended Protocol II
additional 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**

24th Conference of the High Contracting Parties
Geneva, 15 November 2022

**Statement by Amb. Leonardo Bencini,
Permanent Representative of Italy to the Conference on Disarmament**

Mister President,

At the outset, let me congratulate you on your appointment and assure you of our full support and cooperation. Italy aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Mister President,

Amended Protocol II plays a fundamental role in guaranteeing respect for the rules and principles of International Humanitarian Law as its purpose is to prevent superfluous injuries or unnecessary suffering for civilians. We reiterate our call to non-State Parties to accede to it, and to Parties to the original Protocol II to ratify its amended text, as soon as possible. The possibility to promote the universalization through regional appropriate fora is an option we should explore, as it has been the case for other Conventions.

We also call on all Parties to participate in national reporting as an exercise to build trust and measure progress.

Mister President,

Italy is extremely concerned by the continued impact of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and their effects on urban areas and civilian populations that are deprived of crucial infrastructures providing energy, water, healthcare and education systems. For this reason, we attach utmost importance to assistance and cooperation in mine action, as a crucial tool to prevent indiscriminate humanitarian and socio-economic impacts.

Since 2001, we have devoted approximately 80 million Euros to Mine Action programmes. As a sign of renewed commitment, in 2021 we doubled our budget, which was confirmed this year, devoting more than 8.5 Million Euro to initiatives focused on clearance, stockpile destruction, risk education, and victim assistance.

We facilitate assistance to victims with a holistic, gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory approach duly considering the rights of persons with disabilities and post-conflict recovery. The attention for gender, diversity, inclusion along with support to sustainable development is integral part of Italy's humanitarian approaches and strategies.

During this year, Italy is continuing to support UNMAS activities in Iraq, Sudan, Palestine, and Syria related to clearance, mine-risk education and survivors and victims assistance. Our country is also contributing to ICRC activities in Afghanistan, Mali, Niger and Somalia relating to survivors' physical rehabilitation and socio-economic reintegration. In Iraq we also fund an initiative involving local entities focused on risk education activities in areas that host the greater number of displaced people, refugees and returnees. In Sudan, we support UNMAS in order to strengthen the mine action response through explosive ordnance disposal and mine clearance, as well as through capacity-building.

Mister President,

We share the deep concern of the international community for the growing use of IEDs and the serious security threats they pose to civilians, humanitarian workers and peacekeeping personnel. IEDs are frequently used in attacks deliberately targeting large numbers of civilians and are responsible for huge numbers of casualties each year, many of them among children.

In addition to have killed or harmed thousands of victims, IEDs also have considerable reverberating effects, such as displacement of populations, destruction of infrastructure and of historical and cultural heritage sites, ongoing psychological suffering and economic deprivation. In this context, Italy is extremely pleased to inform that it will be participating in the high-level Ceremony to take place in Dublin this Friday for signing a Political Declaration which addresses the humanitarian harm arising from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

We think these efforts of the international community to be particularly timely and more than ever important in light of the unjustified, unprovoked and illegal war of Russia against Ukraine in which Russian use of IEDs is reported. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the Russian use of IEDs and anti-personnel mines in Ukraine, causing unbearable suffering to civilians.

Mister President,

Since Amended Protocol II is the only IHL instrument which explicitly addresses the use of mines other than anti-personnel mines (MOTAPM), let me take this opportunity to briefly address the matter from our perspective.

For Italy, it is crucial to ensure that any weapon that is not prohibited is used in conformity with the rules and principles of international humanitarian law, particularly relating to

discrimination, proportionality, and necessary precautions. In our view, in order to prevent and reduce the humanitarian impact of MOTAPM, it is necessary to restrict their use and to include a number of precautions reflected in Amended Protocol II and its Technical Annex in national military doctrines and plans. These measures are integrated into the Italian Forces' practice and are meant not only to decrease the possible harm to civilians but also to facilitate clearance activities at the end of hostilities, and to revert decontaminated territories to their social and economic use. We think that current practices can benefit and improve from the experience of those States that have relevant experience in military operations and that have shown to act responsibly and always in compliance with IHL.

We believe this is an important issue which deserves further discussion and should remain on the agenda of Amended Protocol II.

Thank you, Mister President.