

Statement by PAX

delivered by Frank Slijper

Meeting of High Contracting Parties to the CCW, agenda item 6. General Exchange of Views Geneva, 16 November 2022

Thank you,

As conflicts rage and drag along in Syria, in Ukraine and in Yemen, to mention just a few, we see old and new weapon technologies destroy lives and livelihoods, especially heavily among civilians. It is therefore that disarmament bodies such as the CCW have the potential to make a real difference for millions of people who face the realities of war.

Unfortunately, we have seen little if any progress, especially on two issues that are relevant here: incendiary weapons and lethal autonomous weapons.

Incendiary weapons

PAX believes it is urgently needed to take concrete action toward stronger protection against the use of incendiary weapons. The immediate and lifelong suffering inflicted by these weapons in conflicts around the world show that Protocol III has failed to achieve its humanitarian goal of protecting civilians.

Furthermore, recent use in Ukraine, documented in the report released last week by Human Rights Watch, indicates that the issue of incendiary weapons remains relevant today.

Despite strong and near-universal support during last year's Review Conference for the proposal to hold informal consultations on the implementation and universalization of Protocol III, two States were able to torpedo this straightforward and reasonable proposal, again showing how consensus decision-making is abused to veto any meaningful steps to make progress in this convention.

Regardless, we urge States to work together in strengthening existing law and closing Protocol III's loopholes.

We therefore urge states:

- to highlight the civilian harm caused by the use of incendiary weapons;
- to highlight the need to strengthen protection of civilians against incendiary weapons; and
- to renew the call for a mandate to hold informal consultations to assess the adequacy of Protocol III; or, if that is blocked, to hold discussions outside the CCW to consider the concerns raised by incendiary weapons, the adequacy of national and international measures to address them, and ways to create stronger international standards.

LAWS

PAX feels encouraged by the statement endorsed by a diverse group of 70 states that was delivered last month during First Committee and called for the international community to



urgently respond to the humanitarian, legal, security, technological and ethical concerns that increasingly autonomous weapons raise. This marks a hopeful step towards an international framework and shows the potential for more ambitious diplomatic action in 2023, especially outside the CCW.

Whereas discussions at the CCW have failed to deliver such concrete results, the statement at the UN General Assembly demonstrates the widespread commitment among states to make progress in regulating autonomous weapons systems.

EWIPA

Please allow me to close my statement by referencing a milestone moment in improving the protection of civilians in conflict outside this room this week. The use of explosive weapons in populated areas is the leading cause of civilian casualties in contemporary armed conflicts. Working in conflict areas around the world, we see the short and long term impacts on a daily basis. PAX therefore welcomes the opening for adoption of the political declaration on strengthening the protection of civilians from the humanitarian consequences arising from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, this week in Dublin, Ireland. The declaration provides hope for the future, especially in times of a continued, heavy toll on civilians from bombing and shelling. We call upon all states to adopt this milestone agreement without delay.

I thank you.