

Twenty-second Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II 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

20 October 2020

Original: English

Geneva, 10 November 2020

Item 10 of the provisional agenda

Improvised Explosive Devices (IED)

Report on improvised explosive devices*

Submitted by the Coordinators¹

I. Introduction

1. The Group of Experts of the High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) met in Geneva from 29 September to 30 September 2020 to discuss the issue of improvised explosive devices (IED), in accordance with the decisions taken at the Twenty-first Annual Conference.² The Coordinators informed the High Contracting Parties on 2 July 2020 and 23 September on how they intend to further advance the work on improvised explosive devices in 2020.

2. Building on the work undertaken by the Group of Experts on this issue since 2009, the discussions on improvised explosive devices were structured as follows:

- i. general exchange of views;
- ii. a panel discussion on new types of improvised explosive devices;
- iii. a panel discussion on methods of clearance;
- iv. an exchange of information on challenges of IED clearance;
- v. updates on the revised counter-IED questionnaire;
- vi. a panel discussion on IED risk education and other methods to protect civilians;
- vii. updates on relevant developments in other fora addressing the threat posed by IEDs.

3. In accordance with the decision of the Twenty-first Annual Conference to “recognize the importance of a balanced involvement of women and men in the Group of Experts in support of its efforts to address the threats posed by IED,” the Coordinators actively engaged in efforts to reflect such balance in the composition of panels.³

* The present report was submitted after the deadline owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.

¹ Colonel Pascal Levant of France and Ms. Diana Esperanza Castillo Castro of Colombia.

² CCW/AP.II/CONF.21/5, paragraph 36.

³ CCW/AP.II/CONF.21/5, paragraph 35.



II. Conduct of the meeting (29 September to 30 September 2020)

A. General exchange of views

4. Participants expressed their concern over the continued widespread use of improvised explosive devices and their detrimental impact on civilians. Delegations stressed the severe humanitarian implications of improvised explosive devices, in particular in urban environments, and their negative effects on security, stability and socio-economic development. Concern was also expressed on the frequent use of improvised explosive devices in the perpetration of terrorist acts.

5. Many delegations called for the universalisation of Amended Protocol II. Several delegations welcomed the development of a voluntary self-assessment tool by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) to assist States in identifying gaps and challenges in their national regulation and preparedness regarding improvised explosive devices, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 73/67.⁴

6. Delegations stressed the need for cooperation and sharing of information on national and multilateral levels to counter the multifaceted threat posed by improvised explosive devices, including the development of mechanisms to report IED incidents. The importance of coordination among Government, industry and civil society was also noted.

B. Information exchange

1. New types of improvised explosive devices

7. Panellists from the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), Nonviolence International Southeast Asia, the Counter Improvised Explosive Devices Centre of Excellence and the Small Arms Survey provided insight on the challenges posed by new types of improvised explosive devices, including new trigger mechanisms and new components used as main charge and detonators. They highlighted the ongoing competition between the developers of new improvised explosive devices and those of counter-IED measures. After the panel discussion, delegations exchanged information on experiences with new types of improvised explosive devices, such as mobile-phone radio controlled IED, anti-helicopter IED and suicide-vehicle IED.

2. Methods of clearance of improvised explosive devices, focussing on urban settings

8. Representatives of the Mines Advisory Group International, UNMAS Iraq, Norwegian People's Aid and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) noted that factors such as population density and the requirement to use less intrusive and consequently less efficient methods made urban IED clearance challenging. Several panellists emphasized the need to ensure the physical security of survey personnel, including through the use of remote survey techniques with satellite imagery. The importance of clearance operations to enable the safe return of displaced populations and the delivery of humanitarian aid was also stressed. After the panel discussion, delegations expressed concern over the rapid innovation among terrorist groups in developing new types of IED.

3. Protection of civilians: risk education and other methods

9. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the Colombian High Commissioner for Peace, UNMAS, Fondation suisse de déminage, GICHD, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) participated as panellists. They noted: i) the increasing diversity of improvised explosive devices, ii) the need to tailor communication methodology to the target audience and iii) the usefulness of enhanced data collection and analysis of IED incidents. Community-based approaches to IED risk education were highlighted, which should take into account the age, gender and background of the beneficiaries. In the case of displaced

⁴ A/RES/73/67.

populations, IED risk education should be based on the knowledge and capacities of such communities.

4. Updates on relevant developments in other fora addressing the threat posed by IED⁵

10. Discussions held under this panel were aimed at ensuring complementarity of efforts. The panellist from the European Union noted that the Union's new counter-IED rules would focus on security at the point of sale of materials that could be used to construct IED. The representative of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) provided a briefing on the organization's IED clearance activities and training provided to member states upon request. The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) presented the report of the Secretary-General on countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices.⁶ Mines Action Canada stressed that demining actions should take into account gender aspects, as well as the interests of and the risks faced by the local communities. The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) presented its voluntary self-assessment tool designed for States to evaluate their preparedness to address the threat posed by IED, while UNMAS highlighted the impact of IED on civilians in both conflict and non-conflict settings.

C. Facilitation of voluntary information sharing to help counter the illicit use of improvised explosive devices

Questionnaire on Counter-IED

11. The Twenty-first Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II requested that the IED Coordinators review and revise the original questionnaire on Counter-IED, in consultation with the Implementation Support Unit and the High Contracting Parties. The Coordinators were requested to present to the 2020 Group of Experts the proposed revisions and to seek the Group's approval of the revised questionnaire.⁷

12. The Coordinators noted that 36 replies had been received to the original questionnaire issued in 2015. The first revision was circulated on 2 July 2020, followed by the second version shared on 23 September based on feedback received from the High Contracting Parties. The Coordinators informed the Group of Experts that the objective of the update was to obtain more specific answers to the questions and to add new questions to reflect the evolution of the mandate related to improvised explosive devices. The revised questionnaire will be submitted as a working paper to the Twenty-second Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II for its approval.

⁵ In accordance with paragraph 35 (f) of the final document of the Twenty-first Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties (CCW/AP.II/CONF.21/5).

⁶ A/75/175.

⁷ CCW/AP.II/CONF.21/5.