

## FACT SHEET

### CONVENTION ON CERTAIN CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

The Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions of the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects entered into force in 1983. It is more commonly known as the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). The purpose of the CCW is to ban or restrict the use of specific types of weapons that are considered to cause unnecessary suffering or which have indiscriminate effects.

#### **The structure of the CCW regime**

The CCW is an umbrella convention which provides the legal rules for joining the regime and its entry into force. It also has Protocols that set out the specific prohibitions, restrictions and other provisions. This allows the CCW to respond to new challenges concerning conventional weapons as the States Parties can negotiate and add further protocols to the regime.

An amendment to Article 1 of the CCW extended the Convention and its Protocols' application to situations of non-international armed conflict.



#### **The CCW's Protocols**

When joining the CCW, States must join at least two of its five following Protocols:

- *Protocol I – Non-detectable Fragments*: Prohibits the use of any weapon designed to injure by fragments which cannot be detected in the human body by X-rays.
- *Amended Protocol II – Mines, Booby-traps and Other Devices*: Prohibits the use of non-detectable anti-personnel mines and their transfer, and prohibits the use of non-self destructing and non-self-deactivating mines outside fenced, monitored and marked areas. Seeks to limit the indiscriminate damage caused by landmines and requires States Parties to take all feasible precautions to protect civilians when using these weapons.
- *Protocol III – Incendiary Weapons*: Prohibits the use of weapons primarily designed to set fire to objects or cause burn injuries against civilians.
- *Protocol IV – Blinding Laser Weapons*: Prohibits the use and transfer of laser weapons designed to cause permanent blindness.

- *Protocol V – Explosive Remnants of War (ERW)*: Prevents and minimises the humanitarian impact of unexploded ordnance and abandoned explosive weapons. Includes provisions on clearance and destruction of ERW, measures for the protection of civilians, recording the use of explosive ordnance, international cooperation and assistance, and victim assistance.

“A key strength of the Convention is its responsiveness to humanitarian issues raised by developments in weapon technologies and armed conflicts.”

Secretary-General's remarks at the Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the CCW, 2012

### **The CCW Implementation Support Unit**

The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) hosts the CCW Implementation Support Unit (ISU). The two-person ISU was established in 2011. The main tasks of the CCW ISU are to provide secretariat services for all CCW meetings, facilitate communications among States Parties and international organisations and support States with the implementation of the CCW and its Protocols. The CCW ISU is located in UNODA's Geneva Branch.

#### **Facts on the CCW and its Protocols**

- As of May 2013, 115 States have joined the CCW. Five States have signed but not yet ratified the Convention. There are 110 States parties to Protocol I, 98 to Amended Protocol II, 106 to Protocol III, 100 to Protocol IV and 81 to Protocol V. For full details see: <http://disarmament.un.org/treaties>
- The CCW is one of the very few instruments of international humanitarian law which seeks to regulate the conduct of non-state actors.
- The adoption of Protocol IV on Blinding Laser Weapons in 1995 marked only the second time in history that States prohibited a weapon before its deployment on the battlefield.
- The explosive devices that cause the greatest number of casualties are explosive remnants of war (ERW). For this reason, Protocol V on ERW is one of the most important instruments under the CCW.
- The use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) has increased dramatically. States Parties to Amended Protocol II have been discussing how to address the humanitarian impact of the use of IEDs.

**For more information:** <http://www.unog.ch/ccw> e-mail: [ccw@unog.ch](mailto:ccw@unog.ch)