MEETING OF THE HIGH CONTRACTING PARTIES
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

Statement
by

H.E. Ambassador Michael Biontino
Permanent Representative of Germany to the Conference on Disarmament

Geneva, 13–14 November 2014

Mr Chairperson¹,

Germany wishes to thank you for chairing the Meeting of the High Contracting Parties 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, the CCW, and assures you of our full cooperation in your work.

We also wish to thank France, the outgoing Chair of the CCW Meeting and the present Coordinator on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, LAWS, for her outstanding work over the past year.

Germany aligns itself with the statement of the European Union.

¹ Ambassador Remigiusz Henczel of Poland
We strongly support the purpose of the Convention to ban or restrict the use of specific types of weapons that are considered to cause unnecessary or unjustifiable injury or suffering to combatants or to affect civilians indiscriminately. Parties to an armed conflict do not have the right to choose methods or means of warfare unlimitedly. In this respect we are concerned about the alleged use of incendiary weapons in attacks by military aircrafts against civilian targets in Syria.

With regard to the issue of the scope of application of the Convention and its annexed Protocols, Germany wishes to call upon those High Contracting Parties that have not yet acceded to the amended article 1, which recognises the fact that most conflicts today occur within the borders of a state and therefore extends the scope of application of the Convention and its annexed Protocols to situations of non-international conflict, to accede to it.

Germany supports the continued efforts towards universalization of the CCW and is pleased that Iraq, an important country in the Middle East, has acceded to it. However, we regret that since the last Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention no other states have joined.

The Convention’s unique structure – a framework agreement that contains general provisions on the CCW operation and specific protocols that contain substantial prohibitions or restriction on the use of certain types of weapons – provides the High Contracting Parties with the possibility to respond in a flexible manner to new developments in the field of arms and defence technologies. It enables the High Contracting Parties to react to emerging challenges and to strive for a balance between military advantages and the protection of combatants and civilians from the worst effects of conventional weapons in armed conflicts.
Germany welcomes the continuation of a thorough and systematic international debate on lethal autonomous weapons systems. We regard the retention of human control over the decision about life and death as indispensable. International humanitarian law applies to new weapons systems, too. Its principles are not negotiable. This year’s informal experts meeting has brought an impressive number of well-known experts on robotics, ethics and international law together. The meeting has shown the need and the interest to have further discussions on LAWS within the CCW. Therefore we deem it necessary to continue these in-depth discussions in another informal experts meeting next year, lasting preferably four days. We are ready to support the Coordinator on LAWS in this regard.

Germany shares the humanitarian objectives of the Convention and its annexed Protocols and provides substantial bilateral assistance for the clearance and disposal of unexploded ordnance, for risk education programmes for the civilian population and for the care and rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration of victims of unexploded ordnance. Last year Germany spent more than 14.8 million EUR for this purpose. Further information can be found in Germany’s annual reports.

Mr Chairperson, we look forward to a productive conference and to next year’s experts meetings in support of the effective implementation of the CCW. The role of this unique forum that gathers political, legal, military and technical expertise cannot be underestimated.

Thank you.