

9. Conventional arms control

Overview

The regulation of different categories of weapons as a means of trying to improve compliance with international humanitarian law has become an important theme in conventional arms control. However, participation in humanitarian arms control agreements is far from universal and states parties to such agreements still face many implementation challenges. According to some states and civil society groups, there are also gaps in humanitarian arms control and disarmament law that need to be addressed. In 2017, negotiations to address some of these challenges continued within the framework of the 1981 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 (CCW Convention), see section I; the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (APM Convention), see section II; and the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), which is discussed in section III.

Afghanistan and Lebanon joined the CCW in 2017, taking the total number of states parties to 125. The CCW Convention has also been a vehicle for discussions on how to regulate new or emerging technologies. The focus in 2017 was on lethal autonomous weapon systems (LAWS). For the first time, these discussions took place in the format of a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE), which focused on the technological, military and ethical/legal dimensions of emerging technologies in the area of LAWS. While no substantive decisions were made, it was recommended that the GGE would convene again in 2018 for 10 days, with a focus on the characterization of systems under consideration and the implications of human-machine interaction.

In the first 11 months of 2017 at least 15 399 civilians were reported killed by explosive weapons, representing an increase of 42 per cent on the same period in 2016. The growing international concern over the use of incendiary weapons and explosive weapons in populated areas, including the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) by non-state armed groups, failed to generate new concrete outcomes during discussions within the CCW. The lack of consensus was compounded by the fact that several expert meetings were cancelled due to a lack of funding. States parties agreed to discuss some of the issues further in 2018.

Sri Lanka and Palestine became the 163rd and 164th states parties to the APM Convention in 2017, which celebrated its 20th anniversary in September. Global casualties from APMs in 2016 were at their highest level since 1999, largely as a

result of the armed conflicts in Afghanistan, Libya, Ukraine and Yemen. Algeria and Mozambique declared themselves free of landmines in 2017, but 57 states and four other areas remained contaminated by mines. Discussions on mines other than anti-personnel mines (MOTAPM) also took place at the CCW in 2017.

Benin and Madagascar ratified the CCM in 2017 taking the total number of states parties to 102. There was continued use of cluster munitions in Syria and Yemen in 2017.

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