



# ICRC

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
61th session

First Committee  
Items 90, 94 & 97 of the agenda

**General and complete disarmament**

**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**

**Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and  
Stockpiling of  
Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction**

Statement by the  
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)  
New York, 9 October 2006

Mr. Chairman,

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has for some years sought to highlight in this forum the humanitarian implications of many life and death issues being discussed under the rubric of arms control and disarmament. Preventing and alleviating the suffering inflicted by weapons and armed conflict are indeed the focus of our daily work. Significant progress has been possible in this field when it has been given a human face. The adoption of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-personnel Mines, the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War are among the best examples of what can be achieved. It was not so long ago that such issues were not even on the international agenda.

But far more needs to be done. Implementation of each of the above agreements presents a daunting challenge which will take years of determined effort. Despite the inconclusive Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms the need to bring the availability of **small arms and ammunition** under stricter control has become no less urgent. Initiatives at the national and regional level remain an effective avenue for dealing with these issues – supported, where possible, by international normative frameworks. Among the most important "next steps" in this field are continued work to implement existing commitments in the Programme of Action, the work of the upcoming Group of Governmental Experts on Arms Brokering and efforts to develop an international arms trade treaty. The ICRC strongly supports such a treaty that would define common standards for regulating arms transfers based on States' responsibilities under international law, including international humanitarian law. We are pleased to note the reference to this body of law in the draft resolution on this subject.

Mr. Chairman,

In less than a month the Review Conference of States Parties to the **Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons** (CCW) will convene in Geneva. As the central treaty which regulates conventional weapons on the basis of international humanitarian law, the ICRC takes a very active interest in this Convention.

A highlight of the Review Conference will undoubtedly be the entry into force on 12 November of the new **Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War**. We strongly urge all States which have not yet done so to ratify this landmark agreement and encourage States Parties to begin making plans to develop the Protocol as an operational framework for addressing the growing global burden of explosive remnants of war. It is also time for States Parties to conclude five years of work on **anti-vehicle mines** with the adoption of a new protocol which will significantly improve the protection of civilians from such weapons, one of which destroyed an ICRC vehicle in the Casamance region of Senegal last month killing one of our delegates and injuring others.

It is regrettable that progress has not been made in the CCW framework on the issue of **cluster munitions**. The problems of accuracy and reliability of many types of cluster munitions have been repeatedly and lethally demonstrated in conflicts in most regions of the world over the past 35 years. Their disproportionate effects on the civilian population and the huge clearance burden they create are well known. The use of cluster munitions can no longer remain unregulated. Although we are encouraged by the increasing numbers of national policy changes regarding these weapons we urge all States to deal with this matter urgently.

Mr. Chairman,

Concerning the **Biological Weapons Convention**, the Sixth Review Conference later this year will help demonstrate whether the community of States has the will and the wisdom to equip itself with the comprehensive measures it needs to protect itself from the hostile use of biological agents. As we stand at the dawn of the "age of biotechnology" few challenges are more important than ensuring that the life sciences are used exclusively for the benefit of humanity. The ICRC's Appeal on Biotechnology, Weapons and Humanity", in 2002, highlighted the myriad developments in the life sciences which can increase the lethality, target ability and deliverability of biological weapons while at the same time making them more difficult to detect and therefore more attractive. Given the extremely decentralised nature of work in the life sciences the ICRC Appeal was addressed not only to governments but to all life scientists and to the biotechnology industry. It called on all actors to assume their responsibility for preventing the hostile use of their knowledge and products.

It is the historic task of the upcoming BWC Review Conference to reaffirm the absolute prohibitions of biological weapons contained in the Convention itself and in the 1925 Geneva Protocol, to call on life scientists and industry to join in concerted preventive efforts and to establish a framework for prevention at the national and international levels. The BWC is a bulwark in the struggle to survive in the face of germs and disease. The ICRC urges States to spare no effort to ensure the effectiveness of this landmark agreement in face of the new challenges it faces.

I thank you for your attention.