

Long-standing efforts to eliminate the use of chemical weapons stem largely from the feeling of repugnance about the suffering which they have caused, and from fears about their possible indiscriminate use. Similar concern has led to proposals that strictures should also be placed on the use of napalm and other incendiary weapons. A committee established by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is reporting on this question of weapons of indiscriminate effect. The substance and conclusions of this report, and also the report prepared by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the use of napalm, will warrant detailed and objective examination by governments in order to determine what measures might be taken with a view to placing effective restraint on the use of the weapons in question. In our view, such an examination would be of particular value if it were to reflect a wider concern with the dangers, especially for non-combatants, arising from the broad range of weapons now employed in conventional war.

A further factor to be considered is the relation between the question of the use of such weapons as napalm and other incendiaries and the broader question of principle concerning the use of all types of weapons in ways which could be indiscriminate in effect or cause unnecessary suffering.

My country has demonstrated its concern that efforts to promote, define and reaffirm international humanitarian law in armed conflict should meet with the greatest and most rapid success. We have stressed at various conferences of the ICRC the importance we attach to international efforts to promote general restraint by military forces in order to avoid unnecessary injury to combatants, and indiscriminate use of weapons that would cause injury to non-combatants.

It seems to my delegation that, if the most expeditious progress is to be achieved, both in the search for the solution of the question of napalm and other incendiary weapons and in the promotion of the further development of international humanitarian law in armed conflict, the examination of possible limitations on the use of incendiaries and other particular types of weapon should be carried out by governments as energetically as possible, but in a body other than the 1974 Diplomatic Conference on Humanitarian Law in Armed Conflict. My delegation has an open mind about the type of forum that could most appropriately consider limitations on the specific weapons in question, and would be agreeable to any decision by this Assembly which provides for separate consideration of the two groups of issues.

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