

REVIEW CONFERENCE:

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW)

BACKGROUND AND SCENARIO

ISSUE: Events leading up to the CCW Review Conference, particularly the four Experts Meetings.

BACKGROUND:

The CCW Treaty has 67 parties, of which 51 have ratified (current list attached).

Protocol II of the CCW deals with the indiscriminate and inappropriate use of land mines. It is important to note that the Convention does not now seek to ban or prohibit land mines, only to prevent their indiscriminate and/or inappropriate use. The topic of a complete ban on land mines has, however, dominated our discussions of reforming the CCW with NGOs.

The Convention began as an instrument of humanitarian law establishing rules of war. It has since evolved to include arms control and disarmament measures. The review process began as largely an exercise in humanitarian law. As the political dimensions of the issue of land mines grew, however, the arms control elements evolved and began to take a larger role at the Experts Group meetings.

Those meetings have therefore been marked by tension between those (mainly the lawyers) who seek simply to strengthen the humanitarian law aspects of the Convention and those (mainly arms controllers and those influenced more by public policy considerations) who want to add new and significant arms control and disarmament measures to the treaty. The USA, largely driven by domestic political considerations, tends to be out front in wanting new arms control aspects to be introduced to the treaty. The UK supports the US position, and is particularly active alongside the US on the issue of transfers. China, Cuba and Pakistan, on the other hand, are worried at the prospect of strengthening the regime, particularly in terms of giving the international community the right to "interfere" in the internal affairs of sovereign states.

The preparatory discussions have revolved around a series of key issues, which will be described in subsequent briefs. Their development through the preparatory sessions will be described here briefly. They are (a) the scope of the treaty (specifically, its application to internal conflicts; (b) verification; (c) the international transfer of land mines (ie an export moratorium); (d) the detectability of mines; and (e) the use of self-neutralizing/ self-destructing mines vs so-called