

CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS AND THE CIVILIAN POPULATION

From January 28 to February 28, 1976 a Conference of Government experts on weapons that may cause unnecessary suffering or have indiscriminate effects (cushie weapons) took place in Lugano (Switzerland) under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross. (A similar meeting had been held in Lucerne in 1974).

A Canadian delegation headed by the former director of Legal Operations Division in the Department of External Affairs attended the Lugano Conference.

The objective of the Lugano and Lucerne Conference was to pave the way for a possible agreement on the restriction or prohibition of the use of such weapons.

The Lugano Conference produced over twenty proposals on various possible restrictions or prohibitions. However, it is clear that further debate and negotiations will be necessary before any meaningful ban or restrictions on certain conventional weapons can be obtained.

These Conferences of Government experts are part of the endeavour to update the norms of humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts. A report on the Lugano Conference was presented to the Geneva Diplomatic Conference on Humanitarian Law.

The Diplomatic Conference considers the Cushie weapons item separately from its study of the Two Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions (e.g. in an Ad Hoc Committee on Conventional Weapons).