

**United Nations Regional Seminar on Promoting the Universality OF CCW and its
Protocols in Central Asia**

Almaty, Kazakhstan, 24-25 September 2008

Opening Statement

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Excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

This is the fourth in a series of six regional seminars organized by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs with the financial support of the European Union. Our objective is to promote the universality of the 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) and its annexed protocols.

I am delighted that the seminar for Central Asia is being held here – in Almaty, and I would like to thank the Government of Kazakhstan for its kind assistance with the organization of the seminar and the warm welcome extended to all participants.

I would also like to welcome the representatives of the EU, both the Presidency and the Council, at the seminar that has been made possible by the generous financial contribution of the European Union.

Based upon the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) principle that the right of the parties to an armed conflict to choose methods or means of warfare is not unlimited, the Convention of Certain Conventional Weapons is a major IHL and disarmament treaty with constantly growing significance, in particular in the course of last two decades.

On the one hand, because of its very specific structure, this Convention has proved to be a dynamic, innovative and vital legal instrument that can be strengthened and developed to meet new security and humanitarian challenges and further enhance international law through the adoption of new legal standards.

On the other hand, new technologies and their impact on the development of new weapons and weapon systems have been the cause of continuing concern by the international community for a number of decades. Once again, the Convention has proved its usefulness in providing a unique and reliable forum for studying and addressing the impact certain conventional arms have on both combatants and civilians.

In other words, this Convention helps us to save lives and reduce suffering.

Today, the CCW is a dynamic process which brings together diplomats, as well as considerable legal, military and technical expertise from around the world.

Its membership has also increased considerably over the years. With 107 States parties, however, the CCW is still short of universal membership and some important regions of the world are still underrepresented. The fact that all major military powers are parties to the CCW is undeniably a factor of primary importance for its efficiency. Its weakness, however, is in the absence among its members of a number of countries affected by mine and explosive remnants of war, to bring together their experience, expertise and interest.

It is against this background that the Parties to the CCW met in 2006 to review the Convention's status and implementation and agreed to adopt a practical strategy to strengthen the universality of the Convention through its "Plan of Action to Promote the Universality of the Convention and its annexed Protocols".

To this end, the UN, as well as several States parties and the European Union have taken concrete action aimed at promoting the universalization of the Convention. In particular, the European Union has taken this initiative with its Joint Action to promote more accessions, especially by developing states that are suffering from the effects of mines and explosive remnants of war. These regional seminars, as well as the EU generous contribution to the CCW Sponsorship programme complement and, at the same time, will greatly enhance the on-going efforts currently pursued on other tracks.

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

I am now delighted to invite Mr. Bagyt Abylgazin, Counselor to the Minister of Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan, to officially welcome all participants on behalf of the Government of Kazakhstan.

I thank you. On behalf of the organizers and the participants I would like to express our gratitude to the Government of Kazakhstan and to you personally for the support for the holding of this seminar, and in particular for the hospitality and the warm welcome we all received in Almaty.

I now recognise Mr. Tomás Reyes Ortega, who will address the seminar on behalf of Ms. Annalisa Giannella, Personal representative for non-proliferation of WMD of Javier Solana, the EU High representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy.

Thank you. It gives me great pleasure to give the floor to Mr. Gregoire Chilovsky, Charge d'Affairs of the Embassy of France to Kazakhstan and Kirghizstan, who is representing the EU presidency.

Distinguished participants,

Before breaking for the first session of the seminar, I would like to brief you on the methodology of work of this seminar:

The main goal of the seminar is to support the universalization of the CCW in the region by explaining the Convention and its machinery. Hence we will aim at providing as much information as possible about the Convention and its protocols, and clarifying the functioning of the various CCW mechanisms. For this purpose, experts from different entities involved in the implementation of the Convention will make presentations on each agenda items. After each presentation you'll have the possibility to comment, make statements or ask questions.

We would also like to make this seminar as informal and interactive, as possible. For this purpose we will apply the Chatham House rules. You are all encouraged to share information on your national policy and practice and to actively participate in the discussion.

The seminar does not look at the adoption of any final document. Instead, an executive summary based on the wrap-ups by the co-chairs will summarize the main discussion and conclusions.

Last but not least, we hope it will be a result-oriented seminar. The ultimate goal remains the universalisation of the CCW and the adherence of all States from the region of Central Asia to the Convention and its Protocols. Hence, to identify the next steps for participants on possible accession to CCW; to promote the adoption of national legislations to prevent and suppress violations of IHL; and to establish a network of national points of contact for CCW follow-up in the countries from the region.

As stated in the background paper for the seminar, this forum is intended as a starting point in the pursuit of the Convention's humanitarian goals on an ongoing basis and in particular in undertaking efforts to increase the CCW membership. The seminar should not be an end in itself but rather an important part of a sustainable process.

I thank you.

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