

**PROMOTING THE UNIVERSALITY OF CCW AND ITS PROTOCOLS**  
UNODA/EU common initiative for action

**Regional workshop for South and South East Asia and the Pacific Islands**  
Hotel Himalaya, Katmandu,  
17-18 December 2008

**OPENING of the seminar 17 December**

Chair: Mr. Tim Caughley,

Director, United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, Geneva Branch

Podium: H.E. Mr. U Yadav, Foreign Minister of Nepal

H.E. Ambassador of France to Nepal (on behalf of the EU)

Mr. Tomas Reyes Ortega, Office of the Personal Representative for non-proliferation of WMD of the EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Nepal, Representatives of the European Union,  
Excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

This is the last of the 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 the South and South East Asia and the Pacific Islands is being held here – in Kathmandu, and would like to thank Nepal- the host country - for the warm welcome in this delightful environment. We are particularly grateful to the Government of Nepal for their assistance with the organization of the seminar. It is a special honour to have you, Mr. Foreign Minister, to open this important event.

It is also of a particular pleasure for us, the representatives of UNODA, that this particular seminar is organized through our Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, which is now located in Kathmandu and for which this is the first event since the Centre was established here in August of this year. I take this opportunity to thank the Foreign Minister for his and his Government's support to the Centre and to invite the continuing support for the Centre of its 43 regional Members..

I also take this opportunity to also welcome the representatives of the EU, both the Presidency and the Council, at the seminar that has been made possible by the generous funding 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, arms control 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 humanitarian Convention helps us to save innocent lives and to 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 108 States parties, however, the CCW is still short of universal membership and important areas 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 more countries affected by mine and explosive remnants of war, to bring 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".

Under the Plan of Action, the Parties undertook to implement a series of positive measures, and in particular:

- to review their own participation in the Convention with a view to consider acceptance of those Protocols and of the amendment to Article 1 of the Convention, to which they have not yet acceded;
- to encourage the States signatories of the Convention to ratify it as soon as possible;
- to accord priority to encouraging adherence to the Convention and its annexed Protocols by all States, and especially States in regions of conflict or where the level of acceptance of the Convention remains low;
- to prevent and suppress violations of the Convention by persons or on territory under their jurisdiction or control; and
- to encourage involvement and active cooperation in these universalization efforts by all relevant partners.

In pursuit of this Plan, 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, focusing in particular on 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 universalization efforts currently pursued on other tracks.

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen, it gives me a particular pleasure to call on the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Nepal to open this regional seminar.