



**Sixth Review Conference of the Convention on
Conventional Weapons (CCW): General exchange
of views**

**Statement by Hon Phil Twyford
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Control**

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Tēnā koutou, warm greetings, Mr President, Ambassadors, and delegates,

It's my pleasure as Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control to deliver New Zealand's general statement to this Sixth Review Conference of the United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

I extend warm congratulations to you, Ambassador Hwang, for presiding over this Review Conference. I thank you and your team for all the preparatory work you've undertaken, to position us for the best chance of success.

New Zealand is a strong supporter of the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, including this Convention. We are a party to all five protocols, as well as to the additional, standalone treaties prohibiting specific conventional weapons.

The CCW was created to be a dynamic treaty. One that evolves through the adoption of new protocols, responding to developments in weapons technology, the changing international security environment, and to public opinion about what is reasonable for civilians and combatants to endure.

Mr President, we meet as technological developments risk outpacing our rules. And as civilians in conflict zones continue to be disproportionately affected by weapons used, and weapons left behind.

We must use this Convention and this forum for its full intended purpose, to protect civilians and prevent unnecessary suffering.

The CCW must not be a place that initiates discussions, but cannot conclude them.

President, as delegations know, a significant issue for this Review Conference's consideration is what our future work on autonomous weapons systems will look like.

And I hope it comes as no surprise that New Zealand is particularly concerned about the future prospect of unregulated autonomous weapons systems. We're committed, at the highest political levels, to seeing negotiations commence on legally-binding prohibitions and controls.

We know this will take time, and so we're also committed to any interim measures and steps that move us in this direction. In that respect, consensus often serves a useful purpose to build common understandings and ensure buy-in. It should be a dynamic process in which we can see the direction of travel emerging, and progress toward outcomes that strengthen international humanitarian law. Consensus should not be a means to stop certain issues under the Convention's remit being discussed, or to prevent meaningful progress.

We're not willing to be on an endless treadmill if there's no destination in sight – the issue of autonomous weapon systems is simply too important.

Here, I want to thank Belgium and acknowledge their work as GGE Chair to move us forward. I also want to acknowledge the expertise and value-add of international and non-governmental organisations to our discussions, as well as the constructive engagement of delegations.

President, New Zealand is also particularly interested in the implementation of Additional Protocol III on incendiary weapons, in how we might be able to move constructively forward with discussions on mines other than anti-personnel mines, and in how we can reduce unacceptable levels of civilian harm from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

President, let me conclude by returning to where I started – and that is to reiterate New Zealand's strong commitment to the disarmament machinery, to the CCW, and to the humanitarian imperatives underpinning our work. We look forward to working with all delegations throughout this Review Conference.

In the New Zealand language of te reo Māori, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tatou katoa – greetings, greetings, greetings to you all.

Thank you.