

CCW REVCON 17NOVEMBER 2006
CONCLUDING REMARKS BY JOHN DUNCAN, UNITED KINGDOM
AMBASSADOR FOR MULTILATERAL ARMS CONTROL AND
DISARMAMENT

Mr. President

I would like to add my warm congratulations to those of earlier speakers on the effective and impressive way you have chaired of this meeting, ably supported by other members of the bureau. The CCW RevCon seems set to be one of the few successes of this year, at a time when multilateral diplomacy has known many setbacks. This is a tribute to your presidency.

It is also proof that we must not be put off by our setbacks.

Mr President, fellow delegates, not 300 yards from where we sit today are the remains of the League of Nations. We should not forget that following the failure of that organisation to achieve our ambitions for it, the international community, picked itself up and rebuilt the architecture of multilateral diplomacy. The CCW is an important part of that new architecture and the natural successor to the original efforts of our predecessors to establish the Geneva Protocols, setting out the Rules of War.

In the 21st century we have seen the international community focus rightly on the role played by weapons and weapons systems, both as a cause of armed conflict and due to their effects during and after conflict itself. War in the 21st century, unlike nuclear war, most definitely has an aftermath, and we must deal with that aftermath.

Mr. President

Over the past two weeks the CCW conference has given special attention to two particular issues, Anti Vehicle Mines and Cluster Munitions. Two weapons that cause particular concern in modern armed conflict. That it did not prove possible to achieve consensus on new measures governing the use and transfer of Anti Vehicle Mines is a matter of regret. The United Kingdom has joined others in making a unilateral statement on this matter.

On Cluster Munitions Mr President, we have achieved a significant first; an agreement amongst both the States Parties that use these weapons and those whose primary concern is their humanitarian effects. This has not been an easy debate. It has been important to avoid talking past, still less talking at, each other.

The United Kingdom Delegation has listened carefully to the various proposals tabled during the conference. We have noted the ambitious agenda advocated

by certain States Parties. We consider this a laudable and honest attempt to drive forward the debate. However it was soon clear to us that achieving consensus on this mandate was unlikely to secure consensus; and indeed that has proved to be the case. However it is clear Mr President that we must take this matter forward.

It is a pity that some in this room felt it necessary to declare "Failure" publicly, before the conclusion of our discussions and that others do not appear to have understood what has been achieved today.

Mr President, the United Kingdom considers that collectively it would be unacceptable to simply stand by in the face of the human suffering so vividly exposed in the Photo Gallery in the corridors outside this room. We are therefore pleased to see that the CCW has agreed to take up the gauntlet, as a matter of urgency, within a clear timescale and to take account of work in other Fora.

Mr President, the United Kingdom has called for a ban on dumb cluster munitions. We would have been ready to agree a process leading to negotiations on a legally binding protocol, but as I have said, that proposal did not gain consensus. For the United Kingdom, our aim is to bring about change in the real world, not simply to make declarations reaffirming our humanitarian credentials. This real world objective has guided our approach to discussion in Geneva over the past two weeks and our decision to table a compromise proposal and it will continue to guide our efforts over the coming months.

Finally may I congratulate you once again on steering the CCW RevCon to its conclusion.