

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

CONFERENCE OF GOVERNMENT EXPERTS ON THE USE OF CERTAIN CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

SECOND SESSION

On 11 June 1975, the ICRC sent all Governments a circular letter, the more essential portions of which we publish below :

In November 1974, the International Committee of the Red Cross sent governments a provisional mimeographed edition of the report on the work of the Conference of Government Experts on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons (Lucerne, 24 September-18 October 1974). This report was also sent to the United Nations Secretary-General, who transmitted it to the First Committee of the General Assembly, whose agenda contained the item: "Napalm and other incendiary weapons". The printed edition was issued in January 1975, in English, French and Spanish, and was consulted by the Ad Hoc Committee on Weapons at the second session of the Diplomatic Conference on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts (Geneva, 3 February-18 April 1975).

Much work was accomplished at the Lucerne Conference, where problems associated with the use of certain conventional weapons were examined at intergovernmental level for the first time in about forty years.

Because of the complexity of the issues raised by some of the suggestions and proposals, and because of the recognized need to examine thoroughly all data now available and to continue the discussions so as to lead to broad agreement on possible prohibitions or restrictions of the use of such weapons, the experts considered a second Conference of Government Experts on weapons could usefully be convened by the ICRC. The latter had already made known at Lucerne that it would be prepared to convene and organize such a Conference of Government Experts on the same conditions as the previous one.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

The General Assembly of the United Nations took note of the report and of its conclusions [resolution 3255 A (XXIX)]; it welcomed the work already done on the question of prohibition or restriction of use of certain conventional weapons and expressed appreciation of the readiness of the ICRC to convoke another Conference of Government Experts.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Weapons, however, thought that September 1975, the date first suggested for the Conference, was a little too early, and favoured the ICRC's proposal that it should be held at the beginning of 1976. As the third session of the Diplomatic Conference was due to open on 21 April 1976, it was essential that there should be sufficient time between those two meetings to allow governments to digest the results of the Conference on Weapons and brief their representatives at the third session of the Diplomatic Conference.

The ICRC hereby confirms the statement it made at the last meeting of the Committee on Weapons, on 15 April 1975. The second session of the Conference of Government Experts on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons will therefore take place at Lugano (Switzerland), from Wednesday 28 January to Thursday 26 February 1976.

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Attached hereto is the programme of the work of the Conference, as presented to the Committee on Weapons at the Diplomatic Conference.

The ICRC is at the disposal of the governments concerned for the examination of all problems in connection with the work of the Conference. The ICRC would also be glad to know as soon as possible, with a view to facilitating the arrangements for the organization of the Conference, the number and the names of experts which each government intends to delegate.

Work Programme

1. Brief review of the report on the first session and of the discussions in the *Ad Hoc* Committee.
2. *Incendiary Weapons*
 - (a) Introduction and consideration of new information. New facts and new arguments.

(b) Study of the possibility, contents and form of any ban or restriction on use.

This would include examination and clarification of data, definitions related thereto, alternative weapon systems and conclusions as to what the data suggest as desirable and possible.

3. *Small-calibre projectiles*
(same sub-division as in para. 2).
 4. *Delayed-action weapons and treacherous weapons*
(same sub-division as in para. 2).
 5. *Blast and fragmentation weapons*
(same sub-division as in para. 2).
 6. *Other categories of weapons and new weapons*
(same sub-division as in para. 2).
 7. Other business.
 8. Report and follow-up.
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