

**THIRD REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE  
STATES PARTIES TO 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/CONF.III/WP.10  
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**ISSUES TO BE STUDIED ON MILITARY LASER SYSTEMS**

Presented by Germany and Sweden

1. Protocol IV on “Blinding Laser Weapons” 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) was adopted in Vienna on October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1995. It entered into force on July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1998 and, as of today, comprises 83 contracting parties. Protocol IV, Article 1, prohibits the use and transfer (not the development, production and acquisition) of laser weapons specifically designed to cause permanent blindness to unenhanced vision. Article 3 specifies that blinding as an incidental or collateral effect of the legitimate military employment of laser systems is not covered by this prohibition. Article 4 contains a legal definition of the term “permanent blindness”.
2. Under the terms of Article 2, laser systems other than those mentioned in Article 1, are subject to “all feasible precautions to avoid the incidence of permanent blindness to unenhanced vision. Such precautions shall include training of armed forces and other practical measures.” Due to the fact that laser technology has been dynamically developing in the decade since the coming into force of Protocol IV, time has come for the High Contracting Parties to review the implementation and the provisions of this important instrument.
3. Against this background the Delegations of Sweden and Germany are submitting to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Review Conference of the State Parties to the CCW a proposal (CCW/CONF.III/WP.2) that it decide to establish an open-ended Group of Governmental Experts to study feasible precautions which could be taken with a view to improving the design of military laser systems in order to avoid the incidence of permanent blindness to unenhanced vision.

Issues to be studied by the GGE could include the following:

- (i) How is Protocol IV implemented with regard to today's feasible precautions to avoid the incident of permanent blindness to unenhanced vision (Article 2)?
  - (ii) Can today's military laser systems help reduce collateral damage and enhance the capabilities to deescalate?
  - (iii) Could new designs of military laser systems or enhanced protective practical measures help to avoid the incidence of permanent blindness? (i.e. laser protection goggles, helmet with laser protection visor for aircrews, filter for optical devices in army vehicles and laser warning devices for aircrafts; possible future eyesight protection system applicable to a larger bandwidth)
  - (iv) A Military and Legal Expert Group could be asked to introduce "state of the art best practises" in order to reduce collateral damage and avoid the incidence of permanent blindness to unenhanced vision by military laser systems.
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