

Geneva Academy Platform on Improvised Explosive Devices

2016 Annual Meeting - 23 June 2016

Opening Statement by Alice Guitton, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of France to the Conference on Disarmament

The organization of this meeting echoes the organization, one year ago, of the Divonne meeting on 8-9 June 2015. Needless to say that we have witnessed over these twelve months important milestones that were instrumental both in raising awareness about the magnitude and complexity of the issue of Improvised Explosive Devices, and in starting to address it.

The first milestone I would like to mention is, in September 2015, the inaugural meeting of the Counter-IED Leaders' Forum in Canberra, which adopted the Counter-IED Alliance Strategy. We will probably learn more today about the latest developments of this initiative.

Next, I would like to highlight the adoption in November 2015 at the First Committee of the first-ever resolution on "the threat posed by improvised explosive devices". It raised the visibility of the issue of IED as a security problem, and the fact that it was adopted without a vote is a sign that the problem is now well-recognized. Afghanistan, as its representative at the Divonne seminar had announced, tabled this resolution, and Australia and France sponsored it. I was informed that Afghanistan intends to carry on work on this resolution during the 71st session of the First Committee. Afghanistan can count on France's commitment and support in this endeavor.

Also in November 2015, I would like to mention the publication by UNIDIR of a research paper funded by France and titled "Addressing Improvised Explosive Devices – Options and Opportunities to Better Utilize UN Processes and Actors". This report was presented during a side event that took place in the margins of the Seventeenth conference of Amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

Why is France so involved in IED? Because we are confronted with a real, a practical security issue, that kills people – mostly civilians – every day if not every hour. It is a real-life issue. Therefore, our determination will not abate.

Here in Geneva, France will continue to coordinate, together with the Republic of Moldova, the Group of experts on IED in the framework of Amended protocol II of CCW. The coordinators are currently negotiating with the APII delegations a political declaration with a view to adopting it at the Fifth Review Conference in December this year. France will also continue to call for the universalization of Amended Protocol II, particularly in the interest of the protection of civilians.

Addressing IED, however, does not start and stop in Geneva. Bilateral co-operations, like the one that France is developing with the Iraqi security forces and Army, are vital. But the action of specialized international organizations is just as important, be it in the field of humanitarian activities, law enforcement, component control, or other. We very much look forward to hearing the international or regional organizations represented in this room. The view from the field is essential to nurture our efforts at the political level.

Let me come back to the First Committee resolution, to conclude. The Geneva Academy and AoAV have efficiently framed the discussions that you will have today. Yet another, significant contribution to our reflections is expected to be published prior to the next session of the First Committee. I am of course referring to the "Report on IED" that the Secretary-General was mandated to produce. Once this report is published, hopefully in early September, it will be relevant to filter the proposals of this report through the main conclusions of today's brainstorming session.

I wish you a fruitful day, and I leave you in the hands of the organizers.