

Geneva Academy Platform on Improvised Explosive Devices

2017 Annual Meeting - 23 June 2017

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

Improvised Explosive Devices – The Global Response

Let me start by saying how pleasant it is to say a few words for the opening of this brainstorming session for the second time. This event, indeed, looks like it is becoming an annual event, and we are very grateful to the Geneva Academy and to Action on Armed Violence for organizing it. I am glad to see that attendance is still high – apparently, it is expanding, which is a very good sign.

The topic that brings us together today, however, is not pleasant – far from it. The developments that we observe on the topic of IEDs are even worrisome. Let me focus on two of them.

The first trend is the ever-increasing use of suicide bombing, be it in the form of people wearing a suicide vest, or in the form of vehicle-borne IEDs – like the failed attack on the Champs Elysées earlier this week. The reason why I wanted to throw light at this trend is not only the fact that it causes an increasing number of victims but also the fact that suicide bombing is still an under-researched aspect of the fight against IEDs. Is suicide bombing yet another form of IEDs, alongside with road-side bombs or the devices preventing displaced persons, in Iraq or in Syria, from returning home? Or, conversely, does suicide bombing have specificities? To what extent

does it have a humanitarian impact that differs from other IEDs? Does it call for ad hoc preventive measures? These are questions that need to be investigated, and I hope that we will benefit from Action on Armed Violence's research on this issue today as well as from subsequent discussions – with a view to assess whether the issue should be reflected in the 1st committee resolution on IEDs.

The second trend that I wanted to address today could seem more anecdotal, but the consequences are more important than they seem. And this is the reason why I wanted to mention it today. The question relates to terminology: improvised explosive devices versus improvised landmines, Ottawa Treaty vs. CCW, IMAS vs. IED-D standards. I will limit myself to mention the fact that the various texts on the issue of IEDs adopted by the international community (UNGA resolution, declaration on IEDs at the CCW) clearly recognize the fact that the threat of IEDs is multifaceted and calls for an equally multifaceted approach. We need to acknowledge the fact that these approaches are not exclusive from one another and may, on the contrary, be complementary. We also need to try to act together, in all relevant frameworks and fora in order to gather as many stakeholders as possible. The threat is global, the response of the international community must be as comprehensive and diverse as possible. IEDs should not be the instrument of disputes between institutions: they are a real challenge that kills people as we speak and every effort to look at the best way to tackle them is useful. And if this meeting can help to send a clear signal in this regard, I must say that this would be definitely welcomed. Confronting views and approaches is relevant, as long as all push in the same direction. If the confrontation of ideas and approaches leads to contention, division or squabbling, then it ceases to be useful.

Please allow me a last point: dear Kamelia and Iain, your flyer stated that this brainstorming session was "*inspired by the call contained in OP23 of A/RES/71/72*". Well, pursuant to OP23 of the IED resolution, I wanted to announce that Colombia and France will co-organize "*an open,*

informal consultation in preparation for the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, focusing on matters of coordination between the various existing initiatives and approaches relating to improvised explosive devices within the United Nations system and beyond, with information provided by States, international and regional organizations, as well as experts from non-governmental organizations, on efforts to prevent, counter and mitigate the threat posed by improvised explosive devices” on 31 August 2017. This consultation will take place from 10 AM to 4 PM at the *Palais des Nations*. I would like to invite all of you to attend and take part in this exchange of views. Colombia will address IEDs from a law enforcement perspective, and France will focus on the potential involvement of the private sector stakeholders in stemming the flow of IEDs, based on the research project conducted with UNIDIR. The invitation letters will go out soon, and the announcement will also be posted on our website. We look forward to your participation.

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