



**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) Sixth Review Conference
General Exchange of Views
Statement by Sri Lanka, 13 December 2021**

Mr. President,

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you on the assumption of the Presidency of the Sixth Review Conference. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau upon their election. As you are leading this important conference amidst challenges posed by the pandemic situation as well as by the critical substantive issues before the Review Conference for discussion, I would like to assure you of the full support of my delegation to make this Conference a success. We sincerely hope that our discussions this week would lead to forward-looking outcomes that would contribute to further strengthening the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols.

The CCW framework is an important pillar of the multilateral disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control system. We therefore believe that the Review Conference provides an important opportunity to assess fast developing technologies and their application to sophisticated weapon systems with a view to providing legal clarity as well as possible improvements to the CCW framework through internationally agreed benchmarks in response to the evolving warfare technologies.

We are deeply concerned of the potential development and the use of weapon systems that cannot be controlled by human beings. A growing majority of states voicing their concern in the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems have pointed out the legal, ethical and moral consequences of the use of weapon systems that have no human involvement in their critical functions. These weapon systems are inherently unpredictable and unreliable and therefore in violation of the fundamental IHL principles. While national weapons review mechanisms under Art 36 of Additional Protocol I may provide a useful tool in this regard it is imperative to develop a legally binding instrument imposing prohibitions and positive obligations on states, before it is too late.

Despite the clear majority of states as well as the civil society organizations participating in the GGE on LAWS stressing the need to retain the centrality of human control in the use of force, we wish to express our deep disappointment that the final meeting of the GGE which concluded last week could neither reach consensus on the adoption of a substantive report nor on the mandate of the GGE.

We remain convinced that the mandate of the GGE on LAWS should not only be continued but should also be strengthened with a negotiating mandate. The GGE has been a deliberative forum since 2016. We believe that there is sufficient momentum, understanding and an urgent need to progress toward negotiating a legally binding instrument within the CCW framework in the form of a new protocol on the prohibition of

weapon systems that are capable of selecting and applying force without human intervention. We would like to express our support in this regard to the section on 'General Commitments' of the Chair's Paper circulated as an annex to the GGE Report.

We earnestly hope that this Review Conference will pay heed to the call of the growing majority of states, recognize the critical juncture at which we are on this issue and remain true to the humanitarian objectives of the CCW.

With regard to the discussion on Anti Vehicle Mines (AVMs) or Mines other Than Anti-Personnel Mines (MOTAPM), Sri Lanka takes note of the divergent views over scope, definition as well as related technical details including detectability. We support the discussion on reducing harm to civilians and the indiscriminate effects of these weapons. However, it is also important to take into consideration that AVMs are used as legitimate defensive weapons by a number of states. Therefore putting in place a credible mechanism for providing technological and financial support for countries to upgrade their AVMs to reduce unintended suffering may be an important consideration. The participation of developing countries with limited military capabilities and resources in these discussions and due consideration of their concerns in this regard is important.

Concerning Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) we support and welcome the adoption of the updated Declaration on IEDs at this Review Conference, as recommended by the 19th Annual Conference of AP II. The updated IED declaration is an opportunity for renewed focus on the issue of IEDs within the CCW framework. The humanitarian consequences of the use of IEDs including their indiscriminate lethal effects as well as the socio-economic impact on civilians pose a grave concern. We support continued discussions, sharing of best practices and striving for innovative solutions in this regard to address the threat of IEDs.

We also wish to highlight gendered impacts of the use of conventional weapons – on women, men, girls and boys. It is important that the High Contracting Parties provide special consideration to varying degrees of impacts on different types of victims with a view to strengthening gender perspectives in disarmament and arms control.

With these comments, Mr. President, please allow me to reiterate Sri Lanka's commitment to working with all partners to achieve a positive and progressive outcome to this Review Conference. Thank you