



**71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly
First Committee
Thematic Debate on the Conventional Weapons cluster**

Statement by
The Delegation of Sri Lanka to the United Nations

24th October 2016

Mr. Chairman,

The category of conventional weapons is perhaps less dramatic in nature and more limited in scope compared to Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs). However due to their wide use in internal and international armed conflicts, these weapons continue to inflict death and tremendous damage globally on a daily basis.

The situation is further aggravated due to the illicit trade and unregulated spread of conventional weapons that has allowed the non –state armed groups to use these weapons in a manner contrary to the principles of IHL, and the victims are largely innocent civilian populations. The situation has gravely affected the developing countries, which are confronted with prolonged conflicts.

As a country, which suffered from a three-decade long internal armed conflict, Sri Lanka is also well aware of the ramifications of the use of conventional weapons.

In this context, Mr. Chairman, it is time for us, as States, to pay greater attention on the implementation of and compliance with conventions, treaties and regulations pertaining to conventional weapons, as well as to strengthen the international law in this area, to alleviate undue suffering, and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal no 16, to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies.

Mr. Chairman,

Sri Lanka values the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) as a principal instrument of IHL, which strikes the right balance between the legitimate security concerns of States, and the assurances of compliance with IHL principles. The Convention, which came into existence as a result of an increased international conviction that the effects caused by certain conventional weapons may be excessively injurious and indiscriminate, has contributed to the regulation of use of conventional weapons global as well as national levels. The decision to retain it as an evolving

instrument providing room to develop adequate and timely responses to the complex challenges posed by the advancement of warfare and the sophistication in weapon technologies makes it unique from other IHL Conventions.

In this context, we welcome the on-going discussions on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) under the CCW framework. Sri Lanka particularly welcomes the outcome of the 2016 Meeting of Experts on LAWS, which agreed on a set of recommendations, as per the mandate agreed to at the 2015 Meeting of High Contracting Parties to the Convention, which Sri Lanka had the privilege to Chair. We hope that the recommendation for establishment of a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) to discuss LAWS in 2017 would attract a favourable consideration by State Parties at the upcoming 5th Review Conference later this year.

Finally Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the outgoing Chair of the 2015 Meeting of High Contracting Parties to the CCW, I also wish to take this opportunity to introduce the annual GA resolution on CCW, tabled by Sri Lanka. The text, which is available as L.4 (A/C.1/71/L.4) contains technical as well as few substantial updates. The text of the resolution has been agreed to by Geneva – based delegations and widely circulated both in New York and Geneva. It is available in the e-deleGATE portal as well.

We believe that the resolution has been drafted in a manner that is acceptable to all delegations, and seek the support for consensus adoption of the same in keeping with past practice.

Thank you.