



Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the UN, Geneva

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Sri Lanka says a dialogue among States should be at the center of any future discussion on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems

Sri Lanka has said it “wishes to see the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) move beyond, where a dialogue among States would be at the center of any future discussion on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS), and that such a process will help in ensuring clarity on the concerns of States, as well as to create a matrix of common elements which could be derived from the debate”.

Addressing a dedicated discussion within the CCW agenda on Lethal Autonomous Weapons, Sri Lanka’s delegate to the Session Mrs. Mafusa Lafir, Second Secretary of the Sri Lanka Mission in Geneva, highlighted that the debate on LAWS within the CCW “is not a question of whether to ban or not to ban the autonomous technology, but a question as to what this technology should be applied to and not applied to”. She said it should be an exercise “to explore how the State Parties can take pre-emptive action on the development and the use of lethal autonomous weapons, while not affecting the much required civilian and non-lethal military use”. She noted that the concerns over the concept of ‘dual use technology’ in the nuclear field also has relevance to the issue of LAWS and that it is important to consider safeguards that can help avoid the abuse and unintended consequences of this technology.

Opening the discussion, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka in Geneva Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha who presided over the 121 member meeting of the High Contracting Parties on the CCW held on 12th – 13th November 2015 in Geneva, had called on State Parties for an enhancement of the current mandate of the meeting of experts on LAWS for next year, to enable a consensus on the subject ahead of the 2016 Fifth Review Conference of the CCW.

Earlier, Deputy Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the UN in Geneva Mrs. Samantha Jayasuriya, delivering the Sri Lanka country statement, observed that given the easy access to conventional weapons and the extent of damage conventional weapons can cause even after the cessations of fighting, it can potentially result in considerable cumulative human and material costs. She said Sri Lanka is well aware of the ramifications of conventional weapons which in common terms are called “inhumane weapons”, given the country’s own experience of a three-decade long internal armed conflict. Sri Lanka had to face a grave challenge in clearing an estimated 1.3 million land mines, anti-personal mines, IEDs and other unexploded ordinance that affected over 640 villages in the former conflict areas. Highlighting the priorities faced by Sri Lanka in improving its national demining capacity and mine actions, she said the country has gained considerable experience and good practices on demining activities, and Sri Lanka was willing to share them with others in need.

Referring to the CCW framework she further highlighted that the ongoing discussions on Mines Other Than Anti-Personal mines (MOTAPM) and Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS), remains of critical importance to move ahead the agenda of the CCW and to ensure general security for all. Referring to the new technical ideas proposed to reduce the indiscriminate and injurious impact of these weapons including its devastating human costs, she emphasized the need to have a credible and predictable mechanism, which includes equal and affordable access to all States of these technologies, in order to achieve consensus decisions on the use of MOTAPMs.

The CCW heard over 60 countries making interventions expressing their opinion on the various aspects of conventional weapons, including 23 States that engaged in a dedicated discussion on LAWS, for the first time at a Meeting of the High Contracting Parties. Participating in the meeting as Observers were a considerable number of UN agencies, international organizations and civil society representatives advocating on disarmament issues, particularly on the subject of LAWS (Killer Robots).

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