Remarks by H.E. Sumith Dassanayake, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka at the consultations convened by the President of the Seventh Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), 17 November 2026

Mr. President,

Since this is the first time that Sri Lanka is taking the floor, I congratulate Ambassador Julien Thöni of Switzerland for assumption of Presidency of the Seventh Review Conference of the CCW. We thank you for convening these informal consultations.

We also thank you and Ambassador Elmer Salcedo of Peru, for presenting the "Proposal on the mandate and modalities for the future work of the GGE on LAWS", and for consulting delegations on it prior to the Review Conference.

Mr. President,

The continued relevance of the CCW framework depends, in part, on its ability to address new and emerging issues in a timely manner, including by progressively developing the rules of international law applicable to armed conflict, as envisaged in the Preamble to the Convention.

Sri Lanka is of the view that, at the Seventh Review Conference, the High Contracting Parties must establish an explicit, time-bound mandate to negotiate a legally binding instrument on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS).

Such an instrument should strictly prohibit autonomous weapon systems that operate outside human control, those that target human beings directly, and which do not comply with IHL.

We reiterate our consistent position that machines must never be delegated the authority to execute life-and death decisions without human intervention. Human judgement and control are essential throughout the life cycle of these weapons systems to maintain legal, ethical and operational integrity, and to ensure their compliance with IHL.

Based on this understanding, we express broad support for the proposal that we are discussing today, presented by the Chair of Main Committee II.

Mr. President,

Given that discussions on LAWS have been ongoing for over a decade, and consensus was reached on a set of elements for a possible instrument in September this year, we believe that a mandate focusing on more deliberations is neither necessary nor productive.

Sri Lanka expects that a Protocol containing clear prohibitions should be negotiated and presented for adoption within a clearly specified, shortest possible time frame. The rapid development of these technologies must caution us against delaying the establishment of a legal framework any further.

While recognizing the importance of consensus, we believe that consensus should facilitate rather than impede, meaningful progress.

We therefore urge all delegations to be guided by the objectives of the CCW and engage in a constructive spirit towards achieving a positive outcome on this matter.

My delegation stands ready to support you and to engage with all High Contracting Parties, to work towards a successful outcome that is in line with the objectives of the CCW.

Thank you.