Statement by Sri Lanka at the Preparatory Committee for the Seventh Review Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW)

07-09 September 2026, Palais des Nations, Geneva

Agenda Item 5 - General Exchange of Views

Mr. Chair,

At the outset, the Delegation of Sri Lanka warmly congratulates His Excellency Julien Thöni, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the Conference on Disarmament on assumption of the Chairmanship of this Preparatory Committee as well as the Seventh Review Conference. We express our full confidence in your leadership as we lay the foundation for a successful Seventh Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) in November this year. You may be assured of Sri Lanka's constructive cooperation and engagement throughout this session.

Mr. Chair,

The Seventh Review Conference of the CCW arrives at a pivotal juncture in global security. We are witnessing rapid advancements in military technology alongside escalating conflicts that severely impact on civilian populations and civilian infrastructure. In this context, the CCW remains an indispensable legal instrument to prohibit and restrict the use of specific conventional weapons that cause excessive injury or have indiscriminatory effects.

Sri Lanka reaffirms its unwavering commitment to International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and humanitarian disarmament. We emphasize that all weapons, regardless of their technological sophistication, must strictly comply with the core principles of IHL, including distinction, proportionality, military necessity, and precautions in attack.

Mr. Chair,

Turning to Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS), Sri Lanka wishes to reiterate its consistent position that human control is essential throughout the life cycle of such systems to maintain the ethical, legal, and operational integrity. Machines must never be delegated the authority to execute life-and death decision without human intervention.

We take note of the valuable discussions conducted within the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (GGE on LAWS) and its report adopted at its final session in September this year. Sri Lanka strongly advocates for the Seventh Review Conference to establish an explicit negotiating mandate for a legally binding instrument on lethal autonomous weapons systems as a new protocol to the Convention based on the discussions at the GGE on LAWS. Such protocol should strictly prohibit autonomous weapon systems that operate outside human control, or those that target human beings directly; and which do not comply with the IHL.

Mr. Chair,

To ensure that the upcoming Seventh Review Conference achieves meaningful outcome documents rather than procedural stagnation, Sri Lanka would like to make the following constructive proposals:

i. The Review Conference must move beyond generic exploratory work programs and adopt clear, time-bound negotiating mandates, particularly regarding lethal autonomous weapons systems.

ii. While consensus is important, we believe that it should not be an obstacle to achieve progress. We urge High Contracting Parties to exercise flexibility, mutual understanding, compromise to ensure procedural rules facilitate progress.

iii. We emphasize the focus on strengthening international assistance, technology transfer, and capacity-building under Amended Protocol II and Protocol V to assist affected States in demining, clearance of unexploded ordnance and victim assistance.

iv. Introduce formal annual review checkpoints during the 2026–2031 period to monitor progress of the Convention and its Protocols and to a mechanism to monitor emerging military applications of artificial intelligence.

Mr. Chair,

In conclusion, the Seventh Review Conference offers a crucial opportunity to reaffirm the human element in disarmament and demonstrate that international law can effectively adapt to modern security challenges. Sri Lanka stands ready to work alongside you and all High Contracting Parties to deliver a forward-looking outcome.

Thank you