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**STATEMENT
BY**

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**DURING THE THEMATIC DEBATE ON CONVENTIONAL
WEAPONS**

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STATEMENT BY SOUTH AFRICA DURING THE THEMATIC DEBATE ON CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

19 October 2016

Chairperson,

Given time-constraints, we have restricted this statement to some of the most pressing issues in the field of conventional weapons.

The growing membership of the ATT is evidence that many countries around the globe share the common vision and goals of the Treaty. The ATT sets high norms and criteria that States should adhere to when considering arms transfers, thereby preventing the illicit trade in conventional arms, which exacerbates conflict and crime, especially in Africa. Its full and effective implementation and universality will tangibly contribute to promoting international and regional peace and security, as well as reduce human suffering, by addressing the scourge of armed violence, much too often directed at women and children. South Africa's commitment to the ATT underpins its international role as a responsible manufacturer, possessor and trader in conventional arms. South Africa calls on all States which have not yet done so, especially the major conventional arms producing and exporting countries, to ratify or accede to the Treaty in order to further promote its universalization.

Chairperson,

South Africa participated in the Sixth Biennial Meeting of States Parties (BMS6) of the United Nations Programme of Action (PoA) to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in all Its Aspects. South Africa recognises that the implementation of the commitments under the UN PoA has already had a marked impact on the illicit trade and circulation of small arms and light weapons, complemented by actions at the regional level such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Protocol on the Control of Firearms,

Ammunition and Other Related Materials. As during past sessions, South Africa joins Colombia and Japan in presenting the omnibus resolution on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Chairperson,

South Africa remains fully committed to the CCW and the IHL principles enshrined in the Framework Convention and its Protocols, and looks forward to participating in the upcoming Fifth Review Conference. South Africa firmly believes that it is only through the universalization of this Convention that we will truly reduce the suffering caused by certain inhumane weapons. With so many States affected, especially by mines and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW), we encourage all States to sign and ratify the Convention and its Protocols. Likewise, we also call on all States that have yet to sign and ratify the Anti-Personnel Landmine Convention, especially those that continue to possess and use these weapons, to join the Convention without delay.

While artificial intelligence and robotics present both challenges and opportunities, we should always be mindful that the possibility to weaponise such technology raises fundamental ethical, legal, operational and political questions. South Africa believes that the principles of IHL apply to the use of all weapons in any conflict situation, including Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS). We support the recommendations to the Review Conference for the convening of a group of governmental experts to discuss LAWS, which would deepen our understanding of the degree of human oversight or control that "autonomous weapons" require.

The use of explosive weapons in populated areas is yet another important issue that requires attention. It is imperative that we reaffirm the principles and rules of IHL that apply in all situations of conflict so as to prevent the senseless killing of civilians. In this context, we also recognise the increasing threat posed by the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), and the growing humanitarian impact of IED incidents, which mainly affect civilian populations.

Chairperson,

With regard to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), South Africa remains fully committed to the full implementation of all its provisions and the Dubrovnik Action Plan. It is important to continue to stigmatize the use of cluster munitions. The remnants resulting from the use of cluster munitions also has a negative impact on the social and economic well-being of civilians. South Africa condemns the use of cluster munitions by any State or actor. There is a need to intensify efforts towards the universalisation of the Convention as States that hold large stockpiles of cluster munitions and continue to produce these harmful weapons, remain outside the Convention.

I thank you, Chairperson.