Statement by the Kingdom of the Netherlands
delivered by

H.E. Robbert Gabriëlse, Permanent Representative to the Conference on
Disarmament

at

Sixth Review Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention
on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons
Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate
Effects
Mr. President,

As this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor, I would like to congratulate you on your election. You can count on the full support of my delegation. We are certain that under your leadership and guidance, we will be able to make this Review Conference a success.

Mr. President,

Under the CCW, High Contracting Parties have sought to prohibit or restrict the use of various conventional weapons which may be considered excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects. Although, this has not always been easy, the CCW has proven its tremendous value for the development of IHL over the past 38 years. Therefore, the Netherlands calls on all States that have not yet done so to join the CCW.

Through the flexible nature of the CCW, High Contracting Parties have been able to address various challenges. Ranging from laser blinding weapons and mines to incendiary weapons. At the same time, the Convention has been able to respond to new challenges, such as emerging technologies in the area of LAWS.

Over the years, the Group of Governmental Experts has made a lot of progress. We have gained further understanding in various legal, military and technological aspects. This, for example, led to adoption of the 11 guiding
principles in 2019, which includes the firm acknowledgement that IHL continues to apply fully.

However, in view of my delegation it is also clear that we need to continue our work. We share the common understanding among High Contracting Parties that humans must remain in control over autonomous weapons to ensure compliance with International Law, including International Humanitarian and Human Rights Laws.

Therefore, the Netherlands, without prejudice to the terminology, continues to advocate for the further elaboration of the concept of human control and the further clarification of the application of international law. Even though High Contracting Parties have divergent views on how to move forward, the Netherlands hopes we are able to agree on a solid, new mandate for the GGE this week.

Mr. President,

LAWS is obviously not the only reason why the CCW is still relevant after 41 years. Under Amended Protocol II, the emerging threat of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) is addressed. The growing use of these devices by non-state actors continues to harm innocent civilians is a great concern to my delegation. The Netherlands remains committed to prevent the use of IEDS by non-state actors. We believes that we need to continue our work on IEDs in the CCW. Moreover,
given that ERWs and abandoned stockpiles of munitions are an important source of precursors for IEDs. We should further explore how the effective implementation of Protocol V can contribute to our counter IED efforts.

Mr. President,

The Netherlands remains fully committed to respect and comply with IHL and to prevent unnecessary suffering to civilians and combatants. In this regard, the threat of Explosive Remnants of War (ERWs) remains of concern, and their continued threat is illustrated on a daily basis in many post conflict situations. Therefore, the Netherlands continues to attach great importance to Protocol V, which remains an effective instrument to address ERWs in a comprehensive manner. In similar vein, the implementation of Protocol III deserves our share attention both during this Review Conference and beyond.

As a final remark, the Netherlands supports your efforts regarding the finances of the CCW. We urge all High Contract Parties to pay their contribution on time and in full in order to safeguard our work for the future. By living up to our commitments, we will be able to make progress together effectively.

Thank you Mr. President.