President,

At the outset allow me to congratulate you on assuming the Presidency of the 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 (CCW). My delegation wishes to assure you of its full support and cooperation as we work towards the successful outcome of this Review Conference.

We align ourselves with the statements of the NAM and the Statement to be delivered by the Group of Africa.

President,

South Africa reaffirms its commitment to the CCW and the humanitarian principles enshrined in the Convention. South Africa attaches great importance to this framework Convention as evidenced in our ratification of all its Protocols annexed to the Convention and remains committed to taking all necessary steps to fully implement our obligations under the CCW and its Protocols.

My delegation fully supports further work on the universalisation of the CCW and its Protocols and we appreciate the efforts your efforts in this regard. South Africa would like to reiterate that it is only through universalisation of the Convention and its Protocols that we will truly reduce the suffering caused by these inhumane weapons that fall within its scope. With so many
States not parties to the CCW that are affected by these weapons, especially those affected by mines and explosive remnants of war, we realise that our job is far from complete. We therefore encourage States to ratify or accede to the Convention and its Protocols.

President,

The issue of the financial status of the Convention has been discussed at length over the past years. My delegation appreciates your efforts during the intersessional period to continue with informal consultations and in this regard, we wish to thank you for your draft proposals on measures that could be considered to improve the financial stability of the Convention. South Africa supports your inclusive approach, which enabled us to engage with each other in a constructive manner on the proposed efficiency measures to address the financial situation of the Convention. We hope that it, if adopted by the RevCon, would contribute to the effective implementation of the Convention and the operational continuity of the Implementation Support Unit. However, we reiterate that South Africa will continue with its principled approach, as was evidenced by our participation during the informal consultations of not being in favour of any punitive measures on State Parties in arrears.

President,

The CCW remains an important fora for the international community to discuss the humanitarian implications and consequences of the use of certain conventional weapons including taking into consideration the effects of the latest technological developments. We are currently seeing developments in artificial intelligence and robotics presenting both opportunities and challenges. In this regard, we should always bear in mind that the possibility to weaponise such technology raises fundamental ethical, legal, operational and political questions. South Africa values the discussions of the open-ended Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS). In the view of my delegation, international humanitarian law should apply to all indiscriminate weapons, including LAWS. In this regard, we highlight that these or any new technologies of warfare would need to be compliant with the rules of international humanitarian law, including those of distinction, proportionality and military necessity, as well as their potential impact on human rights.
Therefore, South Africa reaffirms its support for the further work on the issue of LAWS. The mandate to be adopted by the High Contracting Parties by the end of this Review Conference should be action-oriented and forward-looking. Agreement on a mere continued discussion mandate on the basis of “business as usual” will be far from satisfactory. It is high time for further work on LAWS, building on the body of work before us, to move into the phase of concrete negotiations. Should the GGE’s further work result in the adoption of an instrument on LAWS that is of a political nature only and as a final product, with no prospect of elevating further work to the level of a legally binding instrument, SA would regard the process as having been a failure.

President,

Recently we have been receiving reports on the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) becoming more common and correspondingly there being an increasing number of victims from IEDs. In view of the growing humanitarian impact caused by IED incidents, which mainly affect civilian populations, South Africa encourages further discussion on this matter under Amended Protocol II especially in view of the discussions which are developing at expert level.

President,

In terms of Mines Other Than Anti-Personnel Mines (MOTAPM), which has been a recurring item discussed in the CCW, differing views persist on this matter. South Africa is supportive of any efforts to minimise humanitarian harm and to ensure full compliance with international law. Thus we support the continuation of informal discussions on this issue with a view to collating the divergent views on the modalities and format of future discussions.

President,

In conclusion, my delegation would like to acknowledge the important role of civil society in keeping the spotlight on those issues that affect civilians in conflict situations and also in ensuring the victims are never forgotten.

I thank you.