Chairperson,

At the outset allow me to congratulate you on assuming the Chair of the 2019 Meeting of 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 meeting.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Non-Aligned Movement.

Chairperson,

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 is evidenced by the fact that my country has ratified 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.

Chairperson,

The CCW remains an important framework 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, which present 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 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 continuation of this work and trusts that the recommendations of the GGE can be confirmed by the High Contracting Parties.

Chairperson,

In terms of Mines Other Than Anti-Personnel Mines (MOTAPM), which has been a recurrent item discussed in the CCW, differing views persist on this matter. South Africa is supportive of any efforts to minimise the humanitarian impact of these weapons in order to comply fully with the established norms of international law. Thus we support the continuation of informal discussions on this issue during 2020, with a view to collate the divergent views on the modalities and format of the further consideration of this issue.

In conclusion, Chairperson, my delegation trusts that the established and sound working relationship between Governments and civil society will continue to be strengthened 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.