Netherlands Statement

under General Exchange of Views,

Meeting of the High Contracting Parties,

Geneva, 13 November 2019

by H.E. Robbert Jan Gabriëlse

Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
to the Conference on Disarmament
Mister Chair,

Please allow me first to congratulate you on your election as Chair of the Meeting. We are very pleased to cooperate with you and you can count on the full support of my delegation.

In addition to the statement by the European Union the Netherlands would like to make the following remarks in its national capacity.

Mister Chair,

The Netherlands attaches great importance to the CCW and its protocols, as indispensable instrument that balances humanitarian principles with military considerations. The Convention remains an effective instrument to ensure that conventional weapons systems are used in accordance with international law. At the same time the CCW provides an inclusive forum to address new developments in relation to the means and methods of warfare. We welcome the participation of a wide range of actors in this forum and value the contributions made by, inter alia, the ICRC, academia and other civil society organizations.

Mister Chair,

The progress made by the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems in 2019 is testament to the relevance and value of the CCW. The group has identified and agreed by consensus upon 11 Guiding Principles, which serve to situate the development and use of lethal autonomous weapons systems in a strong common normative framework based on existing international law.

The Netherlands fully endorses all Guiding Principles and is committed to their application in national policies. While we acknowledge that there is still much work to be done, including but not limited to the further operationalization and elaboration of the Guiding Principles, we encourage all High Contracting Parties to secure the progress the GGE has made by formally endorsing the Guiding Principles during this meeting. We also hope to reach consensus on the allocation of a substantive number of meeting days for the GGE in 2020 and 2021 in order to facilitate substantial progress in the run-up to the 2021 Review Conference.

Having said that, Mister Chair, we also acknowledge that substantive progress within the CCW, including within the GGE LAWS, is contingent upon a well-functioning ISU. While we are grateful for the support received by UNODA during the past two years a dedicated ISU remains needed for this Convention. To this end, a stable financial situation is needed that can sustain the staff of the ISU.
We support the Chairpersons’ efforts in proposing additional measures to improve the convention’s finances in a more sustainable way. The status quo is not an option. As much as these measures may help to stabilize the Convention’s finances, ultimately, the most important matter is that States pay their contribution in time, well in advance of the meetings. We will keep on urging States to do so, so we can talk ‘substance’ rather than finances.

Mister Chair,

Let me conclude by reminding that in the spirit of the CCW, we aim to prevent superfluous injuries and indiscriminate effects. We seek to lower the number of civilian casualties; a task that remains crucial in a time where densely populated areas have increasingly become areas of conflict and international law is flagrantly violated by various actors.

Addressing these humanitarian concerns remains our common goals, and we look forward to contributing our part in these efforts.

Thank