Statement by Greece

Mr President,

As it is the first time we take the floor, under your presidency, allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of your duties and to assure you of our delegation’s full support to your endeavor. I am confident that with your rich experience, you will guide this conference to positive achievements.

Greece is fully aligned with the statement delivered by the European Union.

Mr President,

The CCW brings together expertise from many different fields and enables us to address a wide variety of issues both long-standing and newly emerging. Its inclusive nature, as a forum in which all major stakeholders - including producers - participate, makes it the natural framework to ensure that the necessary balance between military utility and humanitarian concerns is safeguarded.

In this context, the Hellenic Republic considers - as it has from the very outset - that the negotiation process for the ban or the restriction of use of weapons must be undertaken within this framework, in order to ensure the maximum possible impact.

Mr President,

The planning stage in military operations is of utmost importance since military officers formulate overall objectives, gather intelligence, select targets, identify the most suitable type of weapon, and decide under what circumstances and preconditions to deploy it.

However, taking into account that the armed conflicts have shifted from the open battlefields to urban areas, significant challenges have arisen for the protection of civilians, which need to be adequately addressed.

We are all mindful of the long term humanitarian consequences of the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas. It is
therefore necessary that all parties involved in an armed conflict both respect and implement the IHL provisions.

In this regard, we strongly believe that the CCW should play a key role in addressing these challenges in order to ensure and improve compliance with the IHL when hostilities are conducted in urban areas.

Mr President,

Greece is deeply concerned about the growing use and impacts of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). We strongly believe that the use of IEDs constitutes one of the major humanitarian threats as military personnel and civilians are targeted alike.

We are therefore convinced that we must continue efforts to find how to best deal with this threat, in order to mitigate human suffering caused by the use of these explosive devices, bearing in mind that this use constitutes a multi-dimensional issue that requires different responses at different levels (counterterrorism measures, monitoring customs controls, military and humanitarian operations etc).

In this context we would like to underline the importance of the new EU Regulation, namely 2019/1148, which aims to further strengthen the existing rules to prevent terrorist access to explosives precursors.

Mr President,

We are gravely concerned by the recent allegations regarding the use of incendiary weapons against civilian populations in Syria. We urge all States not yet party to join Protocol III and to fully comply with its provisions.

As far as the issue of Mines Other Than Anti-Personnel Mines (MOTAPMs) is concerned, Greece considers that they are legitimate weapons necessary to its national defense planning. We are mindful of the humanitarian aspects arising from the indiscriminate use of these weapons. It is, however, necessary not to ignore military concerns on this issue.

Mr President,

Greece welcomes the outcome of the 2019 session of the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) and the 11th principle adopted. We believe that these (11) guiding principles constitute a good basis for further progress to a more tangible outcome for the establishment of the necessary framework to regulate the potential development and use of LAWS. We would like to express our appreciation for the tireless work of Ambassador Gjorgjinski of the Republic of North Macedonia, which were instrumental in the GGE reaching this positive outcome.

In our view, we must further focus on issues related to the degree and type of human control, since the conformity (or lack thereof) of any Weapon System with the provisions of
International Humanitarian Law depends, among others, on retaining the Human responsibility – and subsequent accountability - for decisions on the use of weapons systems.

For this reason, Greece supports the initial proposal of the President of the GGE to meet for a total of 30 days in Geneva over 2020 and 2021.

Last but not least, we would like to congratulate you, Mr President, for your efforts to address the financial difficulties that the Convention is facing. We would like to stress that it is very important that all States deposit in a timely manner their financial contribution in order to ensure the effective implementation of the Convention.

Thank you