Madam Chairperson,

At the outset, Sri Lanka congratulate you on your appointment as the President-designate of the Fifth Review conference, and wish to commend you for the work being done for this preparatory committee meeting.

We share your concerns on the time constraints posed on a five day Review Conference, and agree that the preparatory committee meeting should focus on completing the work as far as possible, enabling us to complete the work of the Review Conference in a timely manner late this year.

Madam Chairperson,

Sri Lanka values the CCW framework as a principal instrument of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Its unique structure with a framework Convention and subsequent protocols allows the Convention to adapt in response to the evolving nature of conflicts, as well as the sophistication of conventional weapon technologies, the fundamental basis on which this Convention was negotiated.

In such a context, Sri Lanka believes that the Review Conferences provides a timely opportunity for the High Contracting Parties to assess the relevance and responsiveness of the Convention and its protocols to the contemporary challenges since the last Review conference, and to take decision to strengthen the Convention and its implementation, and thereby contribute to further development of IHL.

Madam Chairperson, in our view, following three issues merit the consideration in the upcoming Review Conference and in setting the agenda for the next five year period.
1. **Universalisation of the Convention**

Madam Chairperson, Sri Lanka is pleased to note that the Convention has reached 123 High Contracting Parties as of this date, and we note that a number of countries are interested in joining the Convention in the near future. While applauding the efforts of the successive Presidents, ISU and other partners in achieving this success, Sri Lanka believes that much remains to be done to promote the universalisation of the Convention. While the Convention allows the flexibility for a State which wishes to join it to choose the ratification of any of the two Protocols, we believe that it is also important to promote those High Contracting Parties to consider ratifying other Protocols subsequently. In this regard, Sri Lanka wishes to see language reflecting measures for universalisation, addressing not only the States who are yet to be party to, but also to those States who are already a High Contracting Party. We also note the importance of the sponsorship programme to promote universalisation, and recognise the voluntary contributions made by States in this regard. We are pleased to note that the Final Declaration, acknowledges such voluntary contributions and we further encourage States to contribute for the sponsorship programme in future.

2. **Mines other than anti – personnel Mines (MOTAPM)**

Madam Chairperson, the issue of MOTAPM or the Anti - Vehicle Mines (AV mines) has been in the CCW agenda for over a decade now. The reports highlight that 60% of AV mines victims being civilians should be a stark reminder for us that this issue is well within the purview of the CCW mandate, which is to prohibit or regulate weapons that have indiscriminate effects, and to protect the civilian population.

We note the technical and procedural measures that have been proposed within the CCW to address these concerns. There is no doubt that the new technical ideas proposed for MOTAPMs, such as the introduction of self-destructive features and enhanced detectability could contribute to reduce the indiscriminate and injurious impact of these weapons, in particular its devastating human cost and also to alleviate considerable difficulties in timely delivery of humanitarian aid to affected populations. We believe that such improved technical features should however be
within the equal and affordable access to all States, and that the existing capacity
gaps among States in acquiring related advance technologies within a short span of
time should be taken into account. Unless a credible and predictable mechanism is
put in place including providing technological and financial support for countries to
upgrade their MOTAPMs as proposed, and sufficient confidence building measures
are guaranteed, achieving consensus on the use of MOTAPMs would remain a
challenge, as they are considered to be legitimate defensive weapons by many. As
such, Sri Lanka sees the merit in deliberating at the future CCW meetings on
measures for alleviation of human suffering caused by MOTAPM.

3. **Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS)**

Madam Chairperson, the framework of the CCW allows High Contracting Parties to
address the contemporary challenges posed by the advancing conventional weapons
technologies on the application of International Humanitarian Law. One such
challenge before us is the issue of the emerging technology of lethal autonomous
weapons systems. Sri Lanka notes the clear message delivered by many countries,
informing that they do not intend to develop such fully autonomous lethal weapons.
While welcoming these unilateral commitments, we believe that an international
effort could crystalize the idea that no country would develop such weapons which
will not only be indiscriminate and illegal in nature, but also be a challenge to the
moral and ethical values of human kind.

It is our understanding that the debate on LAWS is not merely a question to ban or
not to ban autonomous technology in weapons systems, but rather a question of the
acceptable threshold of the degree of autonomy in weapon systems or in other
words, to set limits to the degree of autonomy which can be used in lethal weapons,
so that the weapons remain in compliance with the IHL principles. In that context,
fully autonomous weapons systems should not be a subject of divergence, as it
would clearly violate the cardinal principles of IHL.

Sri Lanka believes that the future mandate of the CCW therefore should focus on
prohibition of fully autonomous lethal weapons, while deliberating on the limits that
should be set on the degree of autonomy in lethal weapons. Furthermore, the
principle of meaningful human control should underlie the operationality of such
weapons. We understand that, there is skepticism on such deliberations as to whether it would impact the peaceful use of the autonomous technology including for non-lethal military and defensive purposes. While taking note of these legitimate concerns, we believe that States engage in a formal dialogue would clear our path for resolving such concerns and divergence of views, as well as to gain an understanding on how to set limits in the use of this technology in lethal weapons. In this regard, we welcome the recommendation made by the Meeting of Experts on LAWS who met in April this year, in particular the recommendation with regard to the establishment of an open-ended Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) to explore and agree on possible recommendations on options related to emerging technologies in the area of LAWS, in the context of the objectives and purposes of the Convention.

Sri Lanka fully supports the creation of the GGE, and hopes that the spirit that prevailed on this issue during the last States Parties Meeting in December 2015 and the Experts Meeting in April 2016, will continue at the Review Conference, in order to operationalize this recommendation. As already highlighted by my delegation at the Meeting of Experts, Sri Lanka believes that the CCW considering forward-looking action on this issue is also important, in order to maintain its own credibility, and strike a balance between the legitimate security aspirations of States and the inherent humanitarian concerns of the international community.

Finally Madam Chairperson,

We look forward to a fruitful discussion during this preparatory committee meeting, and to engage actively. I wish to assure you the full support of my delegations for the work and hope that the committee will be in a position to complete its work, and contribute to a successful Review Conference later this year.

I thank you.