THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

Fifth Review Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons
Geneva, 12 - 16 December 2016

General Statement by H.E. Vesna Batistić Kos
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
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Plenary meeting, 12 December 2016
Madam President,

The Republic of Croatia wishes to congratulate you on your election as the President of the 5th Review Conference and assures you of our full cooperation and support in conducting your challenging work in the week ahead. Our thanks also go to the Coordinators and the Friends of the Coordinators for their excellent work over the past year. Allow me to also congratulate your entire team, notably the Secretariat and the Implementation Support Unit, for the preparatory work leading to this event.

We are particularly pleased to see that since the 4th Review Conference two new High Contracting Parties (HCP), Bahrain and Cote d’Ivoire, joined the Convention and its Protocols. We would also like to welcome Lesotho and Montenegro which joined Protocols IV and V respectively.

Croatia, of course, aligns itself with the EU statement made earlier, but would also like to make an intervention from the national position.

Madam President,

Croatia consistently participates in the CCW Meetings and in doing so submits that the use of weapons that cause unacceptable humanitarian harm and excessive injuries threatens peace, safety, security and stability at national, regional and international levels. These weapons, Madam President, are actually the “weapons of mass destruction”; they represent relentless force which not only threatens the sustainable development of many states around the world, but is also undermining the very fabric of our societies.

While Croatia is fully committed to the CCW and the humanitarian principles enshrined in the Convention, we wish to underscore the importance of the full implementation of obligations set by the CCW and its Protocols. We therefore urge States Parties to further demonstrate the political will and mobilize resources necessary to implement these obligations in a bid to achieve clear and tangible results.

In doing its share, Croatia as a HCP to the Convention and all its Protocols has been duly submitting its annual national compliance reports. We have also submitted qualified experts to the Pool of experts and we remain interested in exploring how we can make better use of the available expertise. Furthermore, my delegation spares no effort in encouraging states not yet parties to join the CCW and all its Protocols, as well as share its experience with all those who are, and submit their compliance reports as a crucial instrument of accountability and confidence building in this unique forum.

In these times of widespread economic constraints, many HCPs are finding it difficult to mobilize adequate resources to address a number of important issues. However, this should not stop us in our endeavors to ponder new and far-reaching instruments of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) that could alleviate human casualties in the future. As we have been repeatedly stating in our discussions, Croatia stands ready to work constructively and tirelessly in order to reach broadest possible consensus on issues concerning prohibition or restriction of certain types of weapons that cause not only cause unnecessary harm to combatants but also affect civilians indiscriminately.
In this regard Madam President, I will now very briefly turn to four key elements on which we will focus in our deliberations this week.

1. The work conducted on the issue of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) in the past three years has been very enticing. We are therefore looking forward to a positive decision at this Conference subsequently leading to establishment of a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on LAWS in 2017.

2. We encourage the continuation of the process of substantial discussions on the issue of Improvised Explosive Devices (IED), thus promoting, among other things, a common terminology and the framework for understanding the phenomena of IEDs. We welcome the agreement on the Political Declaration on IEDs to be adopted in this Conference.

3. Concerning Mines Other Than Anti-Personnel Mines (MOTAPM), Croatia shares the concern of many HCPs about the humanitarian impact of these mines. Because it is quite clear that we are still seeking for an appropriate balance between humanitarian concerns and military considerations, we are of the opinion that the topic of MOTAPM should be kept on our agenda. Croatia signed the 2006 Political Declaration on MOTAPM and stands ready to support future efforts in this regard.

4. Lastly, Croatia would like to reiterate that the achievements in terms of prohibiting or restricting the use of incendiary weapons should not be taken for granted. This particularly echoes in the light of numerous reports of the use of air-delivered incendiary weapons against targets located within concentrations of civilians in Syria. While we strongly condemn indiscriminate use of incendiary weapons against civilians in Syria and anywhere, we think that strengthening of Protocol III’s definitions and scope by focusing on actual effects of the weapon, and not its intended effects, is the path we should pursue.

Before concluding, let me state that with regard to the inclusivity and engagement of different stakeholders in the work of the Convention, we see this forum as a positive example of how the integration of civil society, NGOs and academia can not only support but enhance our discourse, thus leading to a more secure and safe world.

Madam President,

We are looking forward to a productive 5th Review Conference of High Contracting Parties in support of the effective implementation of the Convention and we remain committed to working with all partners to achieve this goal.

Thank you.