CCW Meeting of High Contracting Parties

Agenda Item 10
Emerging issues in the context of the objectives and purposes of the Convention

Developments in the field of Science and Technology relevant to the Convention

Geneva, 22 November

H.E. Sabrina Dallafior
Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva

Mr. Chair,

As outlined in the General debate, developments in Science & Technology (or S&T) may not only have positive effects, but can potentially also have a negative impact on international security, notably with regard to aspects relevant to the objective and scope of this Convention.

The CCW saw a first generic S&T discussion at the 2016 Review Conference which acknowledged the CCW’s key role in monitoring new developments in weapons, means and methods of warfare, and which highlighted the need to preserve the continued relevance of the Convention.

Last year’s MSP saw the beginning of a discussion about how S&T developments could potentially be addressed in the context of the CCW.
Mr. Chair,

To offer delegations a reference for considering this issue this year, India and Switzerland have tabled a working paper which compiles a number of pertinent elements and recent developments:

- The paper recalls the CCW discussions in 2016 and 2017 and some pertinent points from these initial discussions (when important points were made about the increasing importance of S&T in general, and the increasing relevance of this issue for the CCW in particular.)
- It refers to resolution A/RES/72/28 and the UNSG’s S&T report (entitled “Current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts”)
- It also refers to the UNSG’s Agenda for Disarmament and the many references about S&T contained therein.
- The paper also makes the case that the CCW has an important role to play in addressing the risks and challenges posed by developments of new weapons or means and methods or warfare, in particular to consider S&T developments that could cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering or have indiscriminate effects.
- Last but not least, the paper also contains a number of questions that the CCW could pursue if it had more time than available in the current format and under the time constraints of this meeting.

Mr. Chair

Switzerland is of the view that the CCW should use the opportunity to recognize, at this point in time, the need to obtain a better picture about

- what developments are most pertinent for the CCW,
- how the CCW can undertake objective and differentiated discussions on S&T developments, and
- how we can best bring in the invaluable expertise from relevant actors in from industry, the research community and civil society.

At some point, to support this discussion, we think the CCW should be able to draw on a mapping of CCW relevant S&T developments. Such a mapping could be conducted under the responsibility of the Chair of the respective meeting of the High Contracting Parties, with the support of UNODA and UNIDIR.
Mr. Chair,

It is evident that emerging developments in S&T will acquire increasing salience in the context of the CCW and it is therefore in our view justified to consider this issue regularly.

It is therefore our hope that the outcome document of this conference will note the importance of this topic and capture the intention of CCW HCP to keep the issue under review, at least under the current generic agenda item, and reflect the opportunities the CCW presents to look at this issue with a (tech-neutral) multi-stakeholder perspective.

Our delegation is keen to hear other delegation’s views on the pertinence of this issue and is prepared to provide you, Mr. Chair, with some text for the final document.