Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects

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Agenda item 7
General exchange of views

Working Paper*

Submitted by the Kingdom of the Netherlands

1. The Netherlands attaches great importance to the CCW and its protocols, as an indispensable instrument that balances humanitarian principles with military considerations. The Convention remains an effective instrument to ensure that conventional weapon 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 observers.

2. Many conflicts around the globe, including in Ukraine and the Middle East, are causing immense human suffering. This further underlines the importance of our continuous cooperation on placing responsible limits on the use of certain weapons. It remains important that all parties in current conflicts act with restraint in accordance with International and International Humanitarian Law, and that harm to civilians is avoided as much as possible.

3. Today's battlefields show rapidly increasing levels of technological sophistication. The Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems offers a concrete path towards a shared understanding of LAWS and towards considering possible measures and regulations. The Netherlands is strongly committed to furthering this discussion. The GGE on LAWS has been granted an ambitious mandate by last year's Meeting of the High Contracting Parties and the Netherlands takes duly note of the international pressure to deliver results as soon as possible.

4. The Netherlands expresses strong support for all efforts to strengthen the CCW and its universalization. In its role as Chair of the GGE LAWS, the Netherlands has on several occasions familiarized non-HCPs with the subject matter that we discuss, and always includes a pitch for them not only to participate in the GGE, but also to become a party to the CCW and its Protocols. After all, this is the most straightforward way to be fully involved in the discussion on LAWS, as well as with regard to the other protocols.

5. CCW universalization reflects a shared commitment to reducing human suffering. The Netherlands calls upon all states and other parties to armed conflicts, to do everything in their power to minimize civilian casualties and to prevent humanitarian crises.

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

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6. The Netherlands underlines the importance of structurally including a gender perspective in our work with regard to the CCW and to ensure the full, equitable, and meaningful participation of women and people of diverse sexual orientations, including in leadership positions, so that all relevant experiences and perspectives are included in our discussions.