



STATEMENT BY SOUTH AFRICA

AT THE THEMATIC DEBATE ON CLUSTER 4 - CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS OF THE 80th SESSION OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY (UNGA80)

23 OCTOBER 2025

Chairperson,

South Africa associates with the statements delivered by the African Group and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

Conventional weapons, particularly small arms and light weapons continue to be the weapons of choice in destabilising communities by fuelling conflict and crime, often with catastrophic effects on civilian populations, including women and children.

Regionally, South Africa remains steadfast in its resolve, together with our fellow African countries and with the support of the international community, to making concrete progress on the implementation of the AU Master Roadmap on “Silencing the Guns in Africa”, within the context of the AU’s Agenda 2063.

Chairperson,

South Africa is a High Contracting Party to the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and to all five of its Protocols. As parties to this Convention, we have an obligation to uphold existing frameworks aimed at protecting civilians from the use of insidious weapons and to encourage more States to accede to the Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW).

South Africa reiterates the urgency and profound importance of addressing the challenges posed by Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) within the framework of international human rights and humanitarian laws. As a nation committed to security, peace, human dignity, and the rule of law, we believe it is imperative to confront the ethical, legal, moral and societal implications of these emerging technologies.

South Africa welcomes the progress made during the 2025 sessions of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on LAWS. It is South Africa's considered view that the rolling text prepared by the Chair serves as a good basis to advance discussions in line with the mandate to consider and formulate elements that will serve as a basis for the commencement of negotiations for a legally binding instrument. While we would not want to rush through the process, we should take cognisance of the rapid technological advances, which if not carefully and swiftly attended to, we will all run the risk of perpetually falling behind.

Chairperson,

South Africa continues to be fully committed to and actively supports the full implementation of the humanitarian disarmament Conventions to which it is a State Party, including the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

With the adoption of the Global Framework for Trough-life Conventional Ammunition Management in 2023, we have put in place a set of political commitments to prevent diversion, illicit trafficking, and misuse of ammunition. It also ensures the safety and security of conventional ammunition throughout its life cycle. South Africa was honoured to preside over the Preparatory Meeting of States held from 23 to 27 June 2025 in New York, where the meeting explored possible options for the development of the process and modalities for the effective implementation of the Global Framework.

We are pleased that Member States agreed on a voluntary reporting template which they will use to provide an initial overview in 2026 on their implementation of the Global Framework. We further welcome the call for international cooperation and assistance to strengthen States' national capacities to effectively address the diverse challenges associated with conventional ammunition, including through the Fellowship Programme.

Chairperson,

South Africa reiterates its support for the outcome document of the Fourth UN Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UN Programme of Action) held in New York in June 2024. As the co-sponsors of the annual omnibus resolution entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects", South Africa, Colombia and Japan will take forward the important outcomes of this Conference. The resolution is regarded as a roadmap for the implementation of substantive work in furthering the aims of the UN Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons and the International Tracing Instrument. It is our hope that this resolution will be supported by all Member States.

South Africa appreciated the support of State Parties for its Presidency of the Twelfth Conference of States Parties of the Arms Trade Treaty in 2026. We will seek to build on the work of previous presidencies, ensuring that CSP12 consolidates progress and reinforces the Treaty's enduring relevance, including to promote its universalisation and

effectiveness. Treaty universalisation remains a core principle that promotes global regulation in the context of imports and exports of conventional arms.

Chairperson,

In conclusion, Chairperson, we should continue to promote the implementation and universalisation goals of all the Conventions and consensus political agreements on conventional weapons to which we are respectively committed to as States. All of the instruments and their related action plans mentioned in this delegation's statement contain commitments, some legally binding, relating to international cooperation and assistance.

However, without converting these commitments made on paper into the provision of concrete and sustained assistance to States that face many very real implementation challenges, especially developing countries, the universalisation of these instruments and their full and effective implementation will remain elusive.

I thank you.