



*The Permanent Mission of Portugal  
to the United Nations*



**PORTUGAL**  
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**United Nations General Assembly  
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Cluster 4 (conventional weapons)**

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Statement by Portugal

Delivered by Mr. Miguel Alegre,  
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Chair,

Portugal aligns with the statement of the European Union and wishes to make a few remarks in its national capacity.

Despite only being treated in cluster 4 of this First Committee, the proliferation of conventional weapons is perhaps the most pressing issue we are facing today as an international community.

As armed conflicts multiply and grow ever more complex, not only between States but also increasingly with non-State actor involvement, as digital technology – including 3D printing, Artificial Intelligence, UAVs and autonomous systems – grow ever more sophisticated but also more accessible, as illicit weapons trade remains a threat, as disrespect for international law and attacks on civilians become more common, the multilateral disarmament agenda must recenter its attention and adopt a firmer stance towards the issue of conventional weapons.

Chair,

The international normative framework is already quite robust.

Hard law such as the CCW and its Protocols, the CCM, the ATT or the Ottawa Convention coupled with soft law instruments such as the EWIPA Declaration, the UN Program of Action on SALW, the GFA or the Political Declaration on the



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responsible military use of AI and autonomy as well as with mechanisms such as UNROCA or the EU Annual Report already form a strong disarmament architecture on conventional weapons.

The normative framework can be strengthened even further, namely through the adoption of a legally binding instrument on LAWS, as recommended by the Secretary-General. Portugal congratulates The Netherlands for their able steering of the GGE on LAWS and hopes that the group can work towards the elaboration of the elements of such an instrument enshrining a two-tier approach: on the one hand, prohibiting systems which cannot be used in compliance with international humanitarian law; on the other, regulating those that can, namely by ensuring human control throughout the system's lifecycle.

However, the focus cannot remain on normative work but our efforts should also include addressing the implementation gap.

Implementing these norms does not only require political will and accountability when violations occur, but it also requires greater cooperation. This cooperation should go beyond State-to-State, for it should include a variety of other public and private stakeholders, including commercial actors and civil society, at the local, national and regional levels.

Instruments such as the Voluntary Trust Fund UNSCAR, to which Portugal is a traditional contributor, or measures such as the designation of national firearms focal points can contribute to such cooperation efforts.

Chair,

To conclude, there are manifold challenges related to conventional weapons. While the normative disarmament framework is strong, it can be further strengthened. But our attention should also look towards implementation. Only through multilateral diplomacy can we achieve concrete and tangible outcomes which may help address the challenges we face.

I thank you.

[453 words]