Chairperson,

At the outset allow me to congratulate you on assuming your post as Chair of the 2015 Meeting of High Contracting Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition or Restriction on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which may be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW). My delegation wishes to assure you of its full support and cooperation as we work towards the successful outcome of this meeting.

Chairperson,

South Africa is fully committed to the CCW and the humanitarian principles enshrined in the Convention. South Africa attaches great importance to this framework Convention having ratified all Protocols annexed to the Convention and remain committed to taking all necessary steps to fully implement our obligations under the CCW and its Protocols, including Amended Protocol II and Protocol V.

Currently there are 121 States Parties and 5 Signatory States to the CCW and so welcomes Algeria and the State of Palestine to the CCW Family. My delegation firmly believes universalisation of the CCW is of utmost importance and we welcome efforts to this end by past and present Presidents and the various chairs to help us achieve universalisation of this Convention. It is only through the universalization of this convention that we will truly reduce the suffering caused by inhumane weapons. With so many States affected by these weapons, that are not party to the CCW especially those affected by mines and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW), we realise that our job is far from complete. We therefore encourage States to sign and ratify the Convention and its Protocols.

Once States have committed themselves to be bound by the Convention, they bear the responsibility for their national implementation of the obligations undertaken by them under the Convention and its protocols and for submitting their national reports. South Africa calls on all States Parties to fully implement their commitments in terms of Protocol III.
We are fully aware of the increasing threats posed by the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), and the growing humanitarian impact caused by IED incidents which mainly affect civilian populations and we wish to encourage further discussion on this. In terms of Mines Other Than Anti-Personnel Mines (MOTAPM), which that has been a recurring item within this body, differing views on this matter persist. However, these weapons pose a humanitarian threat, and with this in mind South Africa is supportive of this item remaining on the agenda.

Chairperson,

While artificial intelligence and robotics present both challenges and opportunities, we should always bear in mind that the possibility to weaponise such technology raises fundamental ethical, legal, operational and political questions. My delegation believes that international humanitarian law should apply to all weapons, including Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS). The concept of “meaningful human control” is something that my delegation is supportive of. In our view, there should always be meaningful human control on questions of life and death. It is therefore imperative that we deepen our understanding of the degree of human oversight or control that “autonomous weapons” – and even those of that are reportedly “semi-autonomous” – would require. South Africa believes that CCW, as an important treaty regulating means and methods of warfare, is the appropriate forum to address the issue of LAWS in an in-depth manner.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank civil society for their tireless efforts in assisting to keep a spotlight on these issues so that the victims of these weapons are never forgotten.

Chairperson,

Finally, we should never forget that the CCW is a key instrument in maintaining the principles of international humanitarian law.

I thank you.