First Committee Sixty-First Session

Thematic Debate on Conventional Weapons

Statement by

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Madam Chair,

As my delegation is taking the floor for the first time, allow me to congratulate you to your election as chairperson of the First Committee. I am speaking on behalf of Austria, the Holy See, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand and Sweden.

Over the last months we have witnessed a growing interest in the issue of cluster munitions and cluster bombs not only in the relevant UN disarmament bodies, but also throughout the whole world.

Madam Chair,

We have serious concerns about the consequences of the inhumane use of cluster munitions. We are of the view that existing general rules of International Humanitarian Law have not been adequately applied in many instances in which these munitions have been used. Recent events have again shown that, in addition to the question of the reliability of such weapons, specific rules need to be established addressing their use during conflict situations, particularly in or close to concentrations of civilians. We believe these rules need to be established urgently.

During the Preparatory Committee meeting of the Third Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) held last September in Geneva we expressed our conviction that negotiations should begin on a legally binding instrument that addresses the humanitarian concerns posed by cluster munitions. To make it clear, this is not a proposal for a total ban on cluster munitions.

It is for these reasons that we have made a proposal for a mandate to negotiate such an instrument. We urge all States to support this proposal at the forthcoming CCW Review Conference in Geneva.

Thank you, Madam Chair.