



UNGA72: FIRST COMMITTEE

Conventional weapons statement by New Zealand

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This Committee can take pride in the role it has played, over the years, in helping set and monitor the standards of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) – standards which help protect all our citizens in places of conflict. Yet, in brutal conflicts around the world, some of the choices being made regarding targeting and weapon selection represent flagrant violations of IHL, while others raise serious doubts about IHL compliance. Once again it is civilians who are paying the price.

Civilians like those in Syria, where cluster munitions are among the inhumane weapons being used in that horrific conflict. New Zealand condemns any use of cluster munitions by any actor. We are deeply concerned that the number of victims of the use of cluster munitions has more than doubled between 2015 and 2016. We call on all States to reject the use of this inhumane and indiscriminate weapon and join the CCM as soon as possible.

As Coordinator for National Implementation Measures under this Convention, New Zealand would welcome the opportunity to engage with any State regarding national measures necessary to fully implement the CCM. We are pleased to have been able to support two workshops on universalization and implementation already this year – one in Uganda in May and a second in New York earlier this week.

New Zealand also encourages all States to strengthen IHL by joining the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, and to support, more broadly, demining efforts. We recognize the importance of following through on our shared objective of achieving a

landmine-free world by 2025. For our part, New Zealand is pleased to have provided NZ\$9.1 million over the past year in support of mine action programmes around the world, and to have provided a voluntary contribution of NZ\$40,000 to the Ottawa Convention's Implementation Support Unit in 2017.

Mr Chair,

It is a matter of considerable regret that the late- and non-payment of assessed contributions under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) has constrained that body from holding the meetings agreed upon at the successful Review Conference last year. New Zealand looks forward to the meeting of the open-ended Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems taking place next month in Geneva and hopes that real progress can be made towards identifying and addressing the challenges that such systems pose for IHL.

New Zealand also looks forward to the debate on the implementation of Protocol III on incendiary weapons at next month's CCW meeting, and welcomes, too, the opportunity to explore issues relating to the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas.

There is an increasing and compelling body of evidence highlighting that the downstream consequences of the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas can result in civilian death and injury far outweighing even the immediate civilian casualties caused by such an attack. In keeping with our pledge at the World Humanitarian Summit last year, New Zealand remains committed to addressing this issue, including through a Political Declaration.

As a proud member of the Arms Trade Treaty, New Zealand has participated actively in the formation of the governance arrangements and processes needed for the initial establishment of the Treaty, including the Voluntary Trust Fund.

The time has come, however, to start shifting our focus from institutional arrangements to ensuring that the Treaty delivers on its humanitarian and security promise. As ICRC President Peter Maurer, said to the 3rd Conference of ATT States Parties last month, "the words of the Treaty remain hollow if they are not matched with actions, and result in changes in policies and behaviors." President Maurer spoke of "the gap between

promise and implementation, between law and respect for the law, and the suffering that results". New Zealand looks forward to working with other States Parties and our civil society partners to address this gap.

We also intend to host a Pacific Conference in February next year in Auckland, New Zealand, to bring together representatives from all our neighbouring Pacific Islands with a view to improving universalisation and implementation of a number of conventional weapon-related treaties in our region - and, in particular, of the Arms Trade Treaty.

Finally, Mr Chair, New Zealand also looks forward to engaging in the Third Review Conference of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons to ensure a substantive outcome that takes forward our shared agenda on preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in these weapons.

Thank you Mr Chair.

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