

Statement under Thematic Discussion on “Conventional Weapons” in the First Committee of the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly on Monday, 26 October 2018

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh aligns itself with the Statement delivered by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) under this thematic cluster.

Bangladesh remains committed to fulfilling her obligations under the Certain Conventional Weapons Convention (CCW) and its Protocols that she is a party to. We commend the work accomplished by the Group on Governmental Experts (GGE) on Lethal Autonomous Weapons System (LAWS), culminating in the consensus adoption of its Reports, including the Possible Guiding Principles. We look forward to discussions in the next meeting of the High Contracting Parties on emerging issues in the context of the objectives and purposes of the Convention.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh acknowledges the forward-leaning outcome of the Third Review Conference on the UN Programme of Action (UN PoA) on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. We take note of the modest progress made in addressing “ammunition” of small arms and light weapons in the context of the UNPoA. The issue of new technologies in manufacturing and marking of small arms and light weapons needs to be addressed in view of the particular constraints faced by developing and least developed countries.

As a signatory to the Arms Trade Treaty, Bangladesh underscores the mutually reinforcing effects of enhanced coordination and synergies among the relevant instruments. We reaffirm the potential contribution of UN PoA to the realization of the relevant targets under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh continues to remain concerned over casualties suffered by our peacekeepers due to indiscriminate use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) by non-state actors in certain mission settings. Such attacks are tantamount to the commission of the gravest crimes under international law. It is critical that further attention be given to UN peacekeeping intelligence, and to enhancing support for mine action by UN peacekeeping missions, including through additional deployment of expertise and equipment.

Bangladesh shares growing concern over the humanitarian consequences of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, including of those with wide area effects. We join other States in calling for the adoption of a possible future political declaration on addressing this issue.

Bangladesh remains concerned over the continued use of anti-personnel mines, including in our neighbouring Myanmar. The UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission in its report presented to the Third Committee last week documented use of landmines by both State and non-State actors in Myanmar’s Kachin, Shan and Rakhine States since 2011, often with fatal consequences.

With regard to the situation in Rakhine State since August 2017, the report says, and I quote, “the Mission has reasonable grounds to conclude that landmines were planted by the Tatmadaw, both in the border regions as well as within northern Rakhine State, as part of the “clearance operations” with the intended or foreseeable effect of injuring or killing Rohingya civilians fleeing to Bangladesh. Further, it seems likely that new anti-personnel mines were placed in border areas as part of a deliberate and planned strategy of dissuading Rohingya refugees from attempting to return to Myanmar.” The Myanmar authorities have a responsibility to account for such conclusions, and take urgent necessary steps to ensure mine clearance, declare a moratorium on production of landmines and end casualties suffered by civilians. During his visit to Myanmar in May 2018, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty Special Envoy called upon Myanmar to accede to the Treaty irrespective of the armed conflict situations in its territory, and we endorse that call.

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh aligns with the position that States have the sovereign right to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms and their components for security requirements and self-defence. We also emphasize that no unilateral coercive measure be imposed on the transfer of such arms.

We, however, continue to urge all responsible Member States to restrict transfer of arms, including small arms and light weapons, to situations where such arms and weapons are or may be used in the commission of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The authoritative evidence provided by the aforementioned Fact Finding Mission about the atrocity crimes committed against the forcibly displaced Rohingya from Myanmar’s Rakhine State should be a particular case in point.

I thank you.