



**The 2018 Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons
(Geneva, 21-23 November 2018)**

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Gianfranco Incarnato
Permanent Representative of Italy to the Conference on Disarmament**

Emerging issues

Mr. President,

Italy shares the deep concern of the international community on the extremely serious humanitarian impact of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas. Such impacts are extensive, and include both direct damage, in the form of death and injury, and indirect and long-term effects relating to the destruction of essential infrastructure, cultural heritage, loss of services, obstacles to humanitarian intervention, high costs of reconstruction and recovery; displacement and denial of return.

For Italy, the starting point of this debate relates to the reaffirmation that the cardinal rules and principles of International Humanitarian Law must be complied with in all circumstances. These relate in particular to the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution.

In line with this, Italy is a party to the Hague Conventions, the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their protocols. We have also ratified all the disarmament and arms control instruments which ban or restrict the use of specific types of weapons that are considered to cause unnecessary suffering to combatants or to affect civilians indiscriminately.

Italy considers that the legal framework applicable to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas is clear, and that the crux of the matter is to implement it in the changing dynamics of current conflicts. In particular, in the context of the increasing relevance of population-centric warfare, a trend that is likely to grow in the future, it becomes necessary for States and their armed forces to adapt their policies, doctrines, and military tactics to the challenges posed by conducting military operations in populated areas, so to properly take into account civilian vulnerabilities.

Several steps can be taken to ensure greater protection of civilians in armed conflict, many of which were highlighted in the Secretary-General's report on "One Humanity, Shared responsibility".

In order to minimize the impact of military operations on civilians, Italian military operations are based on operation plans requiring battle damage assessments that take into account the possible effects on populations from a political, economic, social, and demographic point of view.

Mr. President,

Italy welcomed the informal discussions held this year in the framework of the EWIPA Talks as useful opportunities to increase our understanding of this issue. We support continuation of the debate within the CCW, particularly in order to facilitate exchanges on military practices and other measures that States have put into place to minimize the humanitarian impacts of EWIPA. We are ready to contribute by sharing our own experience on the matter.

Such exchanges would constitute a useful complement to discussions on the broader question of the protection of civilians in armed conflict, within which this issue first emerged, and that is the object of numerous initiatives of which Italy is an active member.

Mr. President,

Scientific and technological developments permeate every aspect of our lives, with profound and largely positive impacts on. It is only natural that the international community would start considering their influence, both positive and potentially negative, on issues of disarmament and international security.

Italy believes there is great value in taking a broader look at the relationship between scientific and technological developments on the one hand, and international security and disarmament on the other. For this reason, last year, we cosponsored UNGA resolution 72/28 that, for the first time, invited States to continue efforts to apply developments in science and technology for disarmament-related purposes. We confirmed our sponsorship of the resolution on this topic tabled during the recently concluded 73rd session of the First Committee.

Within this forum, discussions on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems have touched on one important aspect of this debate, relating to the relationship between emerging technologies in weapons systems and the continued application of IHL rules and principles. Italy has fully supported this process from the start, as well as its continuation in 2019.

We believe that, beyond the LAWS debate, there is merit in examining further how the CCW can monitor developments in weapons, means and methods of warfare in order to identify possible challenges to its effective implementation as well as opportunities for furthering its objectives. In this light, we thank India and Switzerland for presenting Working Paper 2, which contains many useful suggestions on elements that could be considered by this forum, and support the inclusion of this matter on the CCW agenda.

Thank you, Mr. President