United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs
Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament
in Asia and the Pacific

Regional Preparatory Briefing for the Seventh Review Conference of the CCW

Summary Note

On 28 October 2026, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD), in collaboration with the CCW-ISU, convened an informal virtual briefing to support Asia-Pacific States in preparing for the **Seventh Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW)**, scheduled for 16 to 20 November 2026 in Geneva.

The briefing connected regional delegations with the Conference's President-designate, Ambassador Julien Thöni of Switzerland, and experts from the CCW Implementation Support Unit in UNODA Geneva. It combined an overview of preparations and priorities with a detailed examination of the latest consensus outcome on lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS), alongside information on participation, implementation assistance and opportunities for further engagement.

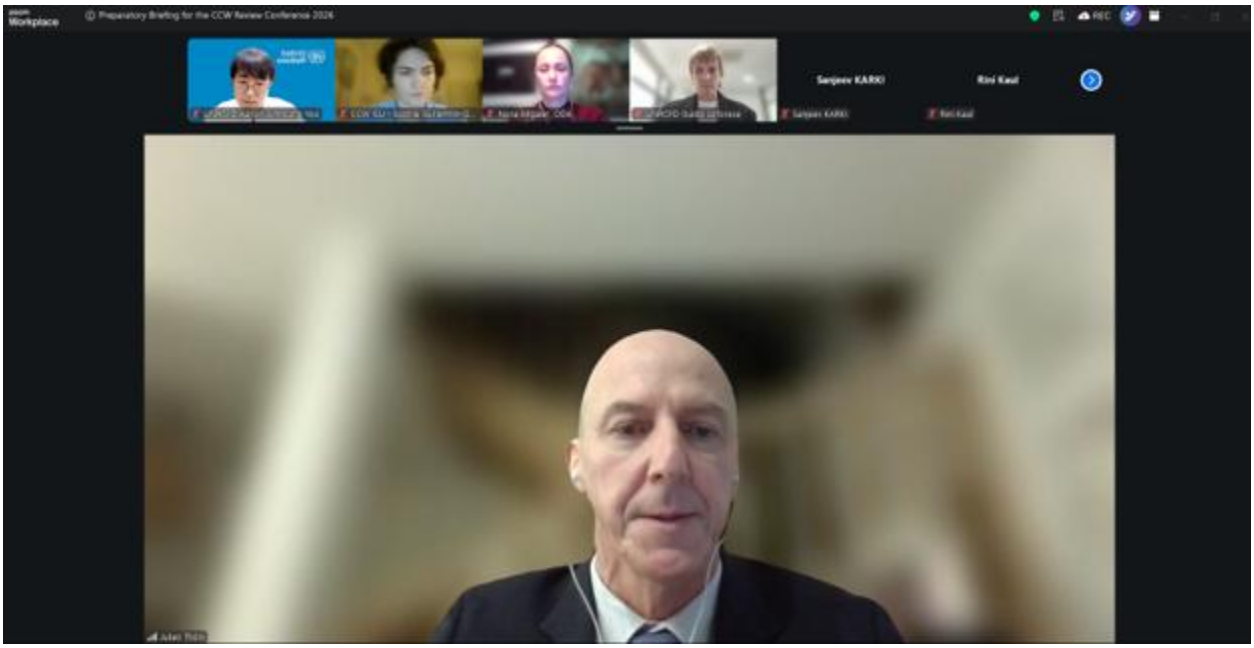
Organized by UNODA through UNRCPD and in collaboration with the CCW-ISU, the event provided an opportunity to bring global deliberations closer to officials working across Asia and the Pacific. The session was moderated by Mr. Guido Loforese, UNRCPD Political Affairs Officer, who emphasized its purpose as a space for delegations to seek clarification and prepare for substantive discussions in Geneva.

Delivering opening remarks on behalf of UNRCPD Director Mr. Deepayan Basu Ray, Deputy Director Mr. Aaron Junhoung Yoo highlighted the timeliness of the Review Conference. High Contracting Parties are expected to consider the outcome of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on LAWS while assessing how the Convention could continue to uphold humanitarian norms developed over decades. Protecting civilians and limiting suffering in armed conflict remained central to this work.

Mr. Yoo linked these priorities to UNRCPD's goal to strengthen the region's connections with global disarmament platforms, many of which meet in New York and Geneva. Regional perspectives, experience and expertise should contribute directly to the development of international rules. "We want Asia Pacific voices to be heard and reflected in the development of international rules that affect us all," he said.

He also reaffirmed UNRCPD's readiness to support States seeking further information on the CCW or other disarmament mechanisms, guidance on relevant processes, or connections with expertise within UNODA. This offer reflected the Centre's broader effort to strengthen links between national officials, their delegations and United Nations processes.

Ambassador Thöni outlined the significance of the forthcoming Conference as an opportunity to assess implementation since the Sixth Review Conference and establish priorities for the years ahead. He described the CCW's contribution over more than four decades to addressing humanitarian concerns associated with conventional weapons through dialogue incorporating legal, military, humanitarian and technological perspectives.



H.E. Mr. Julien Thöni, President-designate of the Seventh Review Conference of the CCW addressed the participants about the key expectations for the upcoming conference.

The Convention's framework structure was an important part of that contribution. Its Protocols address specific weapons and the consequences of their use, while allowing States to consider additional responses as methods and means of warfare evolve. The Review Conference would therefore examine implementation of existing commitments and the Convention's continuing capacity to respond to emerging challenges.

Universalization featured prominently in the President-designate's remarks. Broader adherence to the Convention and its Protocols would extend their humanitarian benefits, and he identified scope for further engagement across Asia and the Pacific. He encouraged regional contributions and emphasized his commitment to inclusive, transparent and consultative preparations, including engagement with States not yet party to the Convention.

Ms. Sophie Guillermin-Golet, Political Affairs Officer with the CCW Implementation Support Unit (ISU), introduced the Convention's purpose and scope. Adopted in 1980, the CCW seeks to prevent and mitigate suffering by prohibiting or restricting certain conventional weapons. Its five Protocols cover non-detectable fragments, mines and booby-traps, incendiary weapons, blinding laser weapons, and explosive remnants of war.



Ms. Sophie Guillermin-Golet introduced the Convention and its Protocols to the participants

Her presentation explained how these instruments address distinct humanitarian concerns. Amended Protocol II regulates mines, booby-traps and other devices, while Protocol III addresses incendiary weapons. Protocol V concerns explosive remnants of war, including measures relating to clearance and the protection of civilians. These established issues remain relevant alongside growing attention to autonomous weapons and other technological developments.

Ms. Guillermin-Golet also highlighted the Convention's capacity to develop through additional Protocols. A mapping of weapons technologies and related concerns illustrated the range of issues States could bring into CCW discussions. The presentation situated current work on LAWS within a wider responsibility to consider how evolving means and methods of warfare affect humanitarian protection.

Ms. Nora Allgaier, Head of the CCW ISU, guided participants through the Review Conference's structure and preparations. Plenary meetings would provide space for the general exchange of views and consideration of institutional and financial matters. Two Main Committees would examine the operation of the Convention and its existing Protocols, and emerging issues, with LAWS expected to dominate the latter discussions.

Among the matters anticipated under Main Committee I were implementation, compliance, transparency and reporting, as well as universalization and support arrangements. Speakers also identified questions concerning mines other than anti-personnel mines and proposals for more dedicated discussions on incendiary weapons under Protocol III. These topics underscored the continuing importance of existing humanitarian commitments within the Conference's broader agenda.

The briefing also explained the relationship between the Review Conference and the Protocol meetings taking place beforehand. Expert meetings and annual conferences under Amended Protocol II and Protocol V would address implementation issues and contribute to the subsequent review. For delegations prioritizing these instruments, engagement in those meetings would offer an opportunity to inform the texts carried forward into the Review Conference.

Preparatory work was already under way through informal consultations on the final declaration and proposals for future work on LAWS. Ms. Allgaier directed participants to UNODA Meetings Place for organizational documents, the Preparatory Committee's report and relevant proposals. She also highlighted the importance of completing participation arrangements, including the submission of appropriate credentials or documentation.



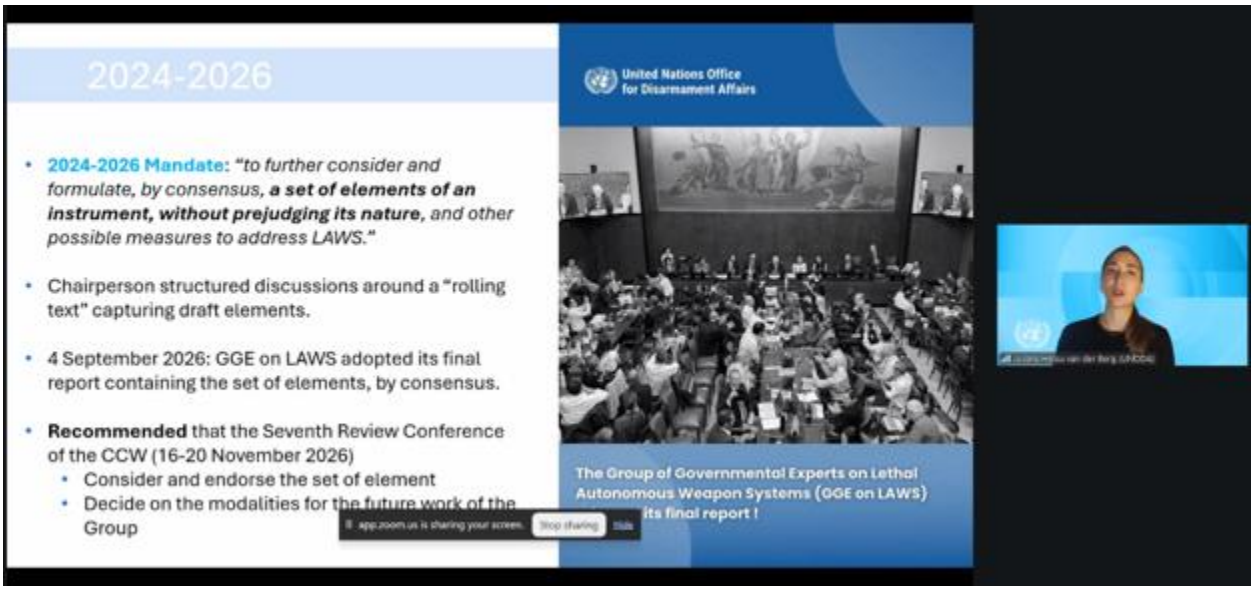
Ms. Nora Allgaier explained the procedural process of the upcoming Seventh Review Conference

Ms. Allgaier noted that forthcoming informal consultations could be accessed online from outside Geneva. This offered officials in capitals an additional opportunity to follow preparations and contribute before the Conference began. Access to the relevant agendas and draft texts would help delegations connect national priorities with the discussions planned under each Main Committee and prepare contributions in advance.

A substantial part of the briefing focused on the report adopted by consensus by the GGE on LAWS on 4 September 2026. Ms. Juliana Helou van der Berg, Political Affairs Officer with UNODA's Geneva Branch, explained the outcome of the Group's 2024–2026 mandate and the choices it would place before the Review Conference.

The presentation traced the GGE's development from the start of its meetings in 2017, including the adoption of eleven guiding principles in 2019 and further understandings on prohibitions and

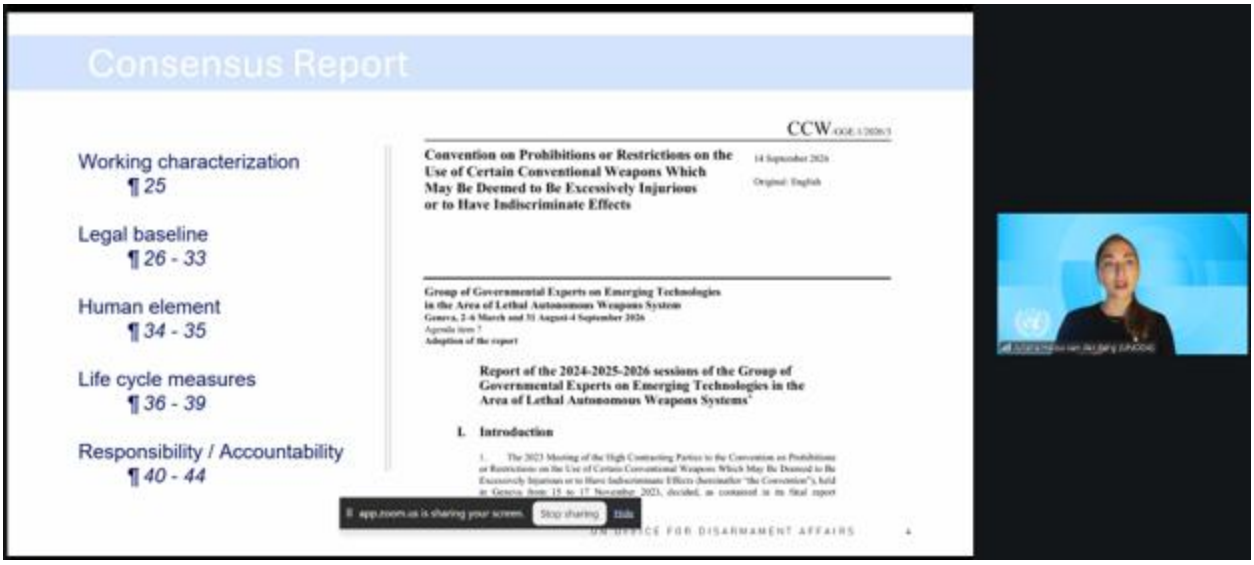
restrictions in 2023. These earlier outcomes informed the latest mandate and showed how successive rounds of expert discussion had gradually developed the substantive foundations for considering international responses to autonomous weapons.



Ms. Juliana Helou van der Berg explained the outcome of the GGE on LAWS

The Group had been tasked with formulating elements of an instrument, without prejudging its nature, and other possible measures concerning LAWS. Through successive discussions of a rolling text, States had developed shared formulations and a deeper understanding of the issues involved. The resulting report established a common substantive basis for further work, while differences remained over the need for additional rules and the form those rules might take.

Ms. Helou van der Berg presented the agreed elements through five connected themes: a working characterization of LAWS, the applicable legal framework, control and human judgement, safeguards across a system's life cycle, and responsibility and accountability. This structure helped participants distinguish the report's substantive achievements from the political decisions still to be taken.



Ms. Juliana Helou van der Berg explained the content of the report of the consensus report of the GGE on LAWS

The working characterization was a notable development. It focuses on systems capable of identifying, selecting and engaging a target with lethal consequences without intervention by a human operator. It takes account of weapons and technological components operating together, rather than tying the discussion to a single platform. This functional approach helps clarify the systems under consideration as technologies continue to evolve.

The presentation also explained that earlier human involvement, such as programming potential target characteristics, does not by itself exclude a system from the working characterization. The agreed text leaves room for future understandings and possible modifications. These features illustrate the care required in interpreting the report and the importance of sustained legal, military and technical engagement.

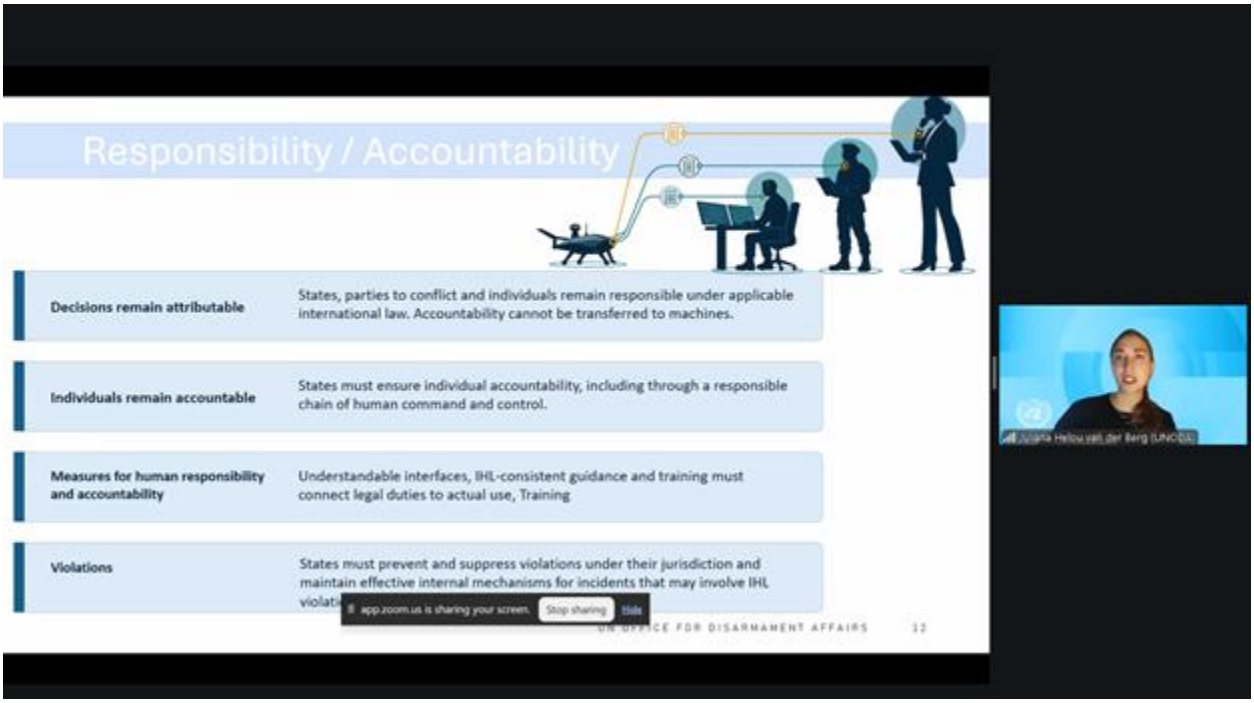
On the legal framework, the briefing emphasized that international humanitarian law applies to LAWS. The report consolidates understandings of existing law and clarifies its application to these systems. Its adoption provides a basis for continued discussion; it does not settle the separate question of whether States should negotiate a new legally binding instrument or pursue another approach.

Control and human judgement were central to the presentation. The agreed elements recognize that control can be exercised through different measures, including those taken before or during use. Human judgement remains necessary to determine and implement measures that ensure compliance with applicable international humanitarian law, taking account of the operational context and the characteristics and capabilities of the system.

Safeguards throughout the life cycle received detailed attention. These include legal reviews in accordance with States' applicable obligations, testing and evaluation, and measures to

understand a system's capabilities, limitations and anticipated effects. The presentation connected these measures with risks such as unintended engagements, loss of control and harm to civilians, emphasizing the need for informed decisions about development and use.

Ms. Helou van der Berg distinguished unintended bias within technological systems, including their data, from automation bias, which can arise when people place excessive trust in a system. The agreed elements address both. On responsibility and accountability, she emphasized the understanding that "accountability cannot be transferred to machines", alongside measures concerning human command structures and responses to possible violations.



Ms. Juliana Helou van der Berg explained the key elements of the report of the GGE on LAWS

The Review Conference would consider the GGE's recommendation to endorse the agreed elements and decide, by consensus, on the possible modalities of its future work. The briefing explained that the mandate and practical arrangements would be closely connected: the ambition of future work could influence its duration, number of sessions and meeting days.

Speakers made clear that different views remained among States. Options included negotiations on a new Protocol and continued consideration of technical, legal and military aspects. The consensus report had therefore advanced common understanding while leaving important choices for High Contracting Parties. The regional briefing helped explain those choices without anticipating the outcome of the Conference.

Alongside these substantive issues, the session addressed how States could engage with the Convention and access support. Ms. Allgaier explained that universalization involves

encouraging additional States to join and encouraging existing High Contracting Parties to adhere to further Protocols. States joining the Convention must accept at least two Protocols and may subsequently join additional ones; adherence to all five is encouraged.

The ISU presented resources to assist national authorities, including guidance on joining the Convention and an implementation guide addressing its Protocols. Support can include briefings, information on financial implications, and technical or legal assistance concerning national implementation. Assistance with annual reporting was also highlighted as a means of helping States fulfil their commitments and share information on progress.

Participants were introduced to the CCW Sponsorship Programme, which supports participation in Convention meetings and is open to eligible representatives of High Contracting Parties and States not yet party. Together with substantive and organizational assistance, such arrangements can help broaden engagement and connect national experience with the Convention's regular exchanges on implementation and emerging concerns.

For Asia-Pacific States, the briefing provided a consolidated account of the issues and processes leading into November's discussions. It placed the latest developments on LAWS alongside established concerns about conventional weapons, while explaining how national officials could follow preparations, consult documentation and obtain further assistance. This combination supported informed participation across the breadth of the Conference's work.

The event also demonstrated the value of sustained contact between the region and colleagues supporting multilateral deliberations in Geneva. Direct access to the President-designate and UNODA experts helped make a complex process more accessible. The discussions reinforced UNRCPD's objective of ensuring that regional expertise and priorities contribute to international consideration of humanitarian protection and emerging weapons technologies.