



**CCW STATEMENT BY SOUTH AFRICA AT THE MEETING OF EXPERTS ON
LETHAL AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS SYSTEMS (LAWS), GENEVA, SWITZERLAND
APRIL 2016**

Chairperson,

My delegation would like to thank you for convening this informal Meeting of Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS), in the context of the purpose and objectives of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). My delegation wishes to assure you of its full support and co-operation as we begin our discussion on this important issue.

Chairperson,

My delegation wishes to thank all the States Parties and NGOs that submitted working papers on the different aspect of LAWS, to help gain a broader understanding of different views that need to be considered as we seek to develop a common understanding of the subject. Several States have suggested that LAWS do not exist at present but rather there are a number of automated weapons in existence.

After two informal Meeting of Experts, the concept of “meaningful human control” or rather “necessary human control” is a requirement that my delegation is supportive of. In the final analysis, there is a necessity for human control in the selection of targets to enforce accountability.

In the absence of an agreed definition, States’ continued engagement will lead to a common understanding of what these weapons are and move this debate forward towards a shared understanding. Mapping out the characteristics of LAWS and the concepts that are surrounding them will help bring us closer to a definition, which is essential in reaching a common understanding on the very nature of these weapons.

Chairperson,

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South Africa does not wish to see the development of legitimate, commercial robotics technology curtailed in any way through any restrictive and prohibitive framework that would affect technology development or advancement for peaceful application.

However, my delegation, once again reaffirms that all new means and methods of warfare should comply with the law of armed conflict. The use of such weapon systems would need to comply with the fundamental rule of International Humanitarian Law, including those of distinction, proportionality and military necessity, as well as their potential impact on human rights. Article 36 of Additional Protocol I of the Geneva Convention states that "In the study, development, acquisition or adoption of a new weapon, means or method of warfare, a High Contracting Party is under an obligation to determine whether its employment would, in some or all circumstances, be prohibited by this Protocol or by any other rule of international law applicable to the High Contracting Party."

In conclusion Chairperson,

My delegation would be supportive of convening a GGE to take this discussion forward in a formal setting. Let me assure you that my delegation stands ready to support you and your team towards a successful and fruitful meeting and we stand ready to examine the questions that you have set that require further clarification and discussion.

I thank you.

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