

**2015 Meeting of Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems  
Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons  
General Debate**

**Statement by the Czech Republic  
13 April 2015**

Mr. President,

I would like to congratulate you and your team for the preparations for this meeting and assure you of the Czech Republic's full cooperation and support in our discussions this week.

Let me thank once more to French presidency of the first 2014 meeting of experts for its excellent work which we have built upon while preparing for this meeting and also to the Secretariat of the CCW for their efforts in organizing these important meetings.

*We also associate ourselves with the EU statement.*  
These days we very often hear that we are on a verge of a technology revolution in the military environment with potentially far-reaching consequences. This community has been paying close attention to all the concerns that this potential revolution might raise as it becomes reality.

We believe that this forum (CCW) is the appropriate platform/venue for continuous work towards our goal of establishing a shared set of international norms on how autonomous weapon systems must perform in order to comply with International Humanitarian Law and other relevant legal regimes as the technology continues to develop.

The Czech Republic is of a view that the ultimate decision to end somebody's life must remain under meaningful human control. This principle should be a common understanding in the international community and we believe it is already implicitly inherent to international humanitarian law. The challenging part is to establish what precisely "meaningful human control" would entail.

There are obvious risks associated with introduction of weapons with autonomous capabilities, but as with any other weapon there are undoubtedly certain benefits as well. **The risks** would be mitigated by the obligation of states to review these new weapons against the requirements of international humanitarian law or any rule of international law applicable to the reviewing party to acceptable level. The Czech Republic remains convinced that there is already an obligation of High Contracting Parties of the Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions to review whether new weapon, means or method of warfare would comply with international humanitarian law or not. **The benefits** of these weapons could be increased by

developing autonomous capabilities that can lead to better protection of non-combatants lives. We should be mindful of all the pros and cons and should not jump to premature conclusions such as that the development, production and use of these weapons should be absolutely and pre-emptively prohibited.

Although autonomous weapon systems, as we generally understand them, do not yet exist, systems equipped with increasingly advanced autonomous features/capabilities have been introduced and are operated by a number of states. This is the evolution that cannot be reversed, be it in military or civilian sector. From humanitarian point of view it might be more reasonable to concentrate on certain critical autonomous features of weapons that could be regulated or prohibited, rather than pursue absolute ban of these weapons. In any way, given the complexity of these matters, it would be useful to have at least some key definitions as soon as possible in order to ensure common understanding of what we are actually talking about.

As far as national policy and practice on autonomous weapons is concerned, we highly welcome the recent "Policy Guidance – Autonomy in Defence Systems" developed and written by the contributing nations and international organisations of the Multinational Capability Development Campaign (MCDC) issued in October 2014. It is a balanced document that seeks to provide guidance for national/international decision makers and can serve as a solid basis for the drafting of national policies and practices on weaponized autonomous systems.

The role of unmanned weapons systems with growing autonomous capabilities is currently one of the most important considerations for many states including my country. The Czech Republic has already developed and continually tested several prototypes of the TAROS (Tactical Robotic System), as part of unmanned terrestrial remote-controlled ground vehicle development program. TAROS is multifunctional platform that is capable of providing a wide range of tasks that run from reconnaissance to combat operations. The current prototype-field-capabilities will be profoundly tested within the NATO ACT Experimental Programme of Work in coming years.

The Czech Republic is fully aware of the implications that introduction of weapons with autonomous capabilities might bring about and we are ready to work on provisions of the future regime that would help minimize unintended and unacceptable engagements.

Thanks for your attention. Thank you Mr. President.