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**PERMANENT MISSION OF INDIA
TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT**

STATEMENT BY

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to the Conference on Disarmament**

at the

**CCW EXPERTS MEETING ON
LETHAL AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS SYSTEMS**

Geneva, May 13, 2014

Mr. Chairman,

It is a pleasure to extend to you our congratulations on chairing this informal experts meeting and to convey our appreciation for the meticulous manner in which you and your team have prepared for this meeting. We would also like to thank Acting Director General of the UN Office in Geneva, Mr. Michael Moller for his opening address.

2. India supports the consideration of the issue of lethal autonomous weapons systems at the expert level, as mandated by the 2013 MSP of the CCW, to 'discuss the questions related to emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems, in the context of the objectives and purposes of the Convention'.

3. India attaches importance to the CCW as a living and dynamic Convention. The objectives and the purposes of the CCW should remain the critical reference point for discussions in this expert meeting. The CCW, in its preamble, recalls the general principle of the protection of civilian population against the effect of hostilities. High Contracting Parties based themselves on the principle of international law that the right of Parties to choose methods or means of warfare is not unlimited, and on the principle that prohibits the employment in armed conflicts of weapons, projectiles and material and methods of warfare of a nature to cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering or long term and severe damage to the natural environment. High Contracting Parties also reaffirmed the need to continue the codification and progressive development of the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict. These include ending of the arms race and pursuing every effort which may contribute to progress towards general and complete disarmament under effective international control. Further the CCW provides for consideration of other categories of weapons not covered by the existing Protocols.

4. International interest in and concern regarding lethal autonomous weapons have been expressed in other UN forums and in some significant reports, including the ones prepared by the ICRC, UNIDIR and Civil Society Groups. These are important inputs for our work. It is a telling comment that some of the states that are viewed as being more advanced than others in some of the technologies capable of contributing to future deployment and use of LAWS are also active supporters of its consideration in the CCW process. This raises interesting questions. Therefore, how we frame the terms of debate even at this nascent stage is vitally important and will impact on the eventual outcome of our deliberations.

5. We see current approaches as falling into two categories. The first is the view that a fresh look is needed on whether lethal autonomous weapon systems meet the criteria of international law and international humanitarian law, especially with regard to the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution, and suggesting a preemptive ban on the research, production and use of LAWS or at least a moratorium until such time there is clarity on the overall implications. The other view is that there is a spectrum of autonomy inbuilt into existing weapons systems and that a prohibition on LAWS is either premature, unnecessary or unenforceable.

6. Mr. Chairman, we welcome your intention to organize our deliberations over the next four days into technical issues ethics and sociology, legal aspects and operational and military aspects with the help of experts in the various fields. We look forward to a comprehensive discussion on the issue during our deliberations. At this stage, it is difficult to predict the end result of our deliberations given the complex nature of the issues involved and the fact that we do not yet have an agreed definition of LAWS. From India's point of view, we would like the CCW process to emerge strengthened from these discussions, resulting in increased systemic controls on international armed conflict embedded in international law in a manner that does not further widen the technology gap amongst states or encourage the use of lethal force to settle international disputes just because it affords the prospects of lesser casualties to one side or that its use can be insulated from the dictates of public conscience. Overall, the consideration of this issue is a test case of whether the CCW can respond meaningfully to evolving new technology as applicable to armed conflict in this century.

7. Mr. Chairman in preparing your report of this meeting under your own responsibility to the 2014 Meeting of High Contracting Parties, we are confident that you will objectively reflect the various dimensions of this debate.

Thank you.