



Statement by Jacqueline O'Halloran Bernstein
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Mr Chairman

I would like to begin by expressing my Delegation's thanks to you for the excellent preparatory work which you and your team have undertaken in preparation for this expert meeting. We feel that the Programme of work for this week truly provides an opportunity for the international community's deeper consideration of the many significant questions raised by the emergence of technologies leading to the possible development of autonomous lethal weapons systems.

Ireland considers that last year's expert meeting, chaired by France, successfully identified many of the technical aspects raised by LAWS, but also highlighted the fundamental legal, ethical and societal concerns which the development of such weapons systems present. Ireland looks forward during this meeting to deepening our understanding of these matters, and thanks the Chair for providing us with a programme of work which can build on the achievements from last year's meeting and, hopefully, lead us to a common understanding of how we can move forward in our consideration of this complex area of our work.

Ireland's starting position in relation to the development of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems is that weapons should remain under effective Human Control. We agree that it will be important for clarity and to move discussion forward to give consideration to the technical and defining characteristics and principles of these weapons systems.

Nonetheless, we feel the debate should be centred in International Humanitarian Law and also in International Human Rights Law and that the technical aspects of our debate, and any development of these technologies, should take place against that framework.

In that regard, the mandate of the CCW and its Protocols is to regulate or ban the use of specific categories of conventional weapons that have effects which trouble the conscience of humanity. As the drafters of our Convention recognized, constant evolution and technological progress requires also a constant responsibility to ensure that new weapons,

means and methods of warfare are not in violation of relevant international law, including international humanitarian law.

The debate on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems reaches far beyond technical and legal complexities, raising fundamental questions about the role of humans in taking lethal decisions in armed combat. The decisive questions may well be whether such weapons are acceptable under the principles of humanity, and if so, under what conditions.

Ireland also has concerns regarding eventual use of these technologies outside of traditional combat situations, for example in law enforcement, and this is one reason why we also see value in discussing these questions in other relevant fora such as, for example, the Human Rights Council, as the issue of autonomy in weapons systems is also relevant for International Human Rights Law.

Ireland believes the concept of meaningful human control is critical to the international community's consideration of the questions thrown up by the development of LAWS. In this regard we would like to note the many excellent research papers which have been developed over the past year, and which are contributing to a better understanding of the troubling and complex issues raised by the prospect of these weapons systems. Ireland notes in particular the valuable work of UNIDIR and is pleased to announce that we will make a small contribution to the second phase of their project on the Weaponization of Increasingly Autonomous Technologies.

Their papers, and other important work by Civil Society Actors is, as always, assisting State's Parties greatly in developing positions, and moving forward, with our work on this challenging theme for the 21st century. Ireland would like to thank those involved for their work and activism in bringing this issues to the International community's attention.

Mr Chairman,

Ireland would like to conclude by noting the various suggestions made by you as to how we might develop a framework for taking forward the future debate on LAWS. In view of the many serious questions raised by LAWS, Ireland would support very much that one outcome of this week's discussions could be agreement on how we can take this discussion further, including through the establishment of a Group of Governmental Experts.

Thank you