



SIERRA LEONE

**Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain
Conventional Weapons
Which May Be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to have
Indiscriminate Effects
(CCW)**

**Meeting of Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons (LAWS)
13 to 17 April 2015**

GENERAL STATEMENT

Mr Chairman,

I would like to start by congratulating you on your election to guide our discussions on this subject and to thank you for the confidence you placed in naming me as a Friend of the Chair. Let me assure you of the full support of my delegation in this regard.

Sierra Leone would like to express its gratitude to the CCW for pursuing its consideration of the subject of Lethal Autonomous Weapons (LAWS). Consideration of LAWS was brought to the CCW, following a report on the subject that was presented to the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Executions at the 23rd Session of the Human Rights Council, in which Sierra Leone is a member. The Special Rapporteur in his report, requested, inter alia, that an internationally agreed upon framework on the future of LAWS be established. As a member of the Human Rights Council, Sierra Leone's interest in LAWS is thus focused on the human rights aspect of their use.

While we agree that advances in science and technology should be encouraged and applauded, we believe that their applications need to be critically reviewed to ensure that their uses do not breach international laws that they conform to ethical and moral standards and respect fundamental rights. It is in this light that the considerations on the topic by CCW should be viewed.

Even though fully autonomous weapons might not exist at present, it is clear that they are in the process of being developed. These discussions are thus timely to consider all aspects of their use before they are actually deployed. The first informal meeting of experts was held in May 2014. This meeting which provided a forum for the exchange of ideas on technical issues, ethics and sociological issues, international law and military aspects, raised a number of issues which need to be further discussed and clarified.

The first informal meeting of experts was held in May 2014, under the able leadership of the Chairman Ambassador Simon-Michel of France. This meeting which provided a forum for the exchange of ideas on technical issues, ethics and sociological issues, international law and military aspects, raised a number of issues which need to be clarified.

First and foremost, the meeting suffered from a lack of clear definitions, most importantly of the term "Lethal Autonomous Weapons". With technological advances, the degree of autonomy of weapon systems can be increased. At what point can they be considered "autonomous"? In addition, there was no clear indication as to the state-of-the-art of the development of such weapons and there is a clear need for transparency in this regard. Furthermore, there is a need to address issues such as accountability and vulnerability to cyber-attacks. Finally, the full human rights and humanitarian impacts of the use of LAWS must be determining factor in decisions on their use or in their prohibition.

Sierra Leone looks forward to a frank debate at this second informal meeting, a common understanding of terminologies and the state-of-the-art, and a clear indication on the way forward. Such a way forward should include discussions on LAWS in a multi-disciplinary forum that would include human rights experts. We expect that the different aspects – technology, legal, ethical and military will be brought together and provide a clear path for consideration of this subject and for taking decisions that would respect the human rights , including the right to life, of concerned persons.

Mr Chairman, I thank you.