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Statement on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS)

by

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Group of Experts meeting on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS)

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Thank you Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to thank Ambassador Biontino of Germany for the tremendous work he has put into leading, once again, the Meeting of Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS), and for his 'Food for Thought' paper. We assure you our full cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

Israel welcomes the convening of this meeting of experts on LAWS in the framework of the CCW. Israel is of the view that the CCW is the most appropriate forum to discuss emerging technologies in the area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems. The CCW is an IHL-focused framework which hosts the most relevant actors in this context. In its previous successful endeavors, the CCW has shown that it has the ability to strike the right balance between military necessity and humanitarian concerns. We are confident that this forum will continue to do so in its deliberations on LAWS.

The discussions to date under the CCW, have already promoted greater understanding of LAWS, including their future implications and associated challenges. There seemed to be a general understanding that the use of LAWS, like other weapon systems, is subject to the Law of Armed Conflict and that LAWS should undergo legal review before they are deployed. Israel shares these understandings and will further elaborate on the issue of legal review in the course of the session dedicated to IHL, later this week.

These discussions have also highlighted that LAWS do not currently exist and that, as the technologies are rapidly developing, it would be difficult, if at all possible, at this stage, to predict how future LAWS would look like, and what their characteristics, capabilities and limitations will be.

At the same time, fundamental questions were left open. For example, there seemed to be no agreement as to the exact definition of LAWS, and there were clearly divergent views on questions relating to the appropriate level of human judgment, or involvement / intervention, over LAWS. In this regard, many states - including Israel - were not



supportive of the call made by some states for a preemptive ban on LAWS.

Considering the divergent views on these questions, it is our view that an incremental, step by step approach, is not only preferable but inevitable. There is much work still ahead of us in order to effectively assess the various aspects of LAWS and potentially forge shared understandings in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

On the issue of human machine interface, it is safe to assume that human judgment will be an integral part of any process to introduce LAWS, and will be applied throughout the various phases of research, development, programming, testing, review, approval, and decision to employ them. LAWS will only operate as designed and programmed by humans.

We should also be aware of the military and humanitarian advantages that may be associated with LAWS, both from operational as well as legal and ethical aspects. These may include better precision of targeting which would minimize collateral damage and reduce risk to combatants and non-combatants.

Mr. Chairman,

As we are approaching the fifth Review Conference, we look forward to engage in fruitful discussions this week aimed at reaching broader understanding of the various aspects associated with LAWS, and accordingly, continue our deliberations under the CCW framework.

Thank you Mr. Chairman