

*CCW meeting of experts on LAWS, 13-16 May 2014*

*Session on Legal Aspects*

*Swedish remarks*

- Sweden appreciates very much this opportunity to take a first look at the questions around lethal autonomous weapon systems, LAWS. We would like to contribute briefly with our view of the legal aspects connected to these issues.
- As we already mentioned, it is important to underline that even if LAWS are referred to as “autonomous”; States would be legally responsible for their use. If violations occur that are attributable to a particular State, that state is responsible according to the rules of State responsibility and international humanitarian law (IHL).
- The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols provide the legal framework for regulating the development and use of any weapon systems. There is, in our opinion, no doubt that the laws of armed conflict would apply also to LAWS.
- Before the deployment of any new weapon system, including one that is autonomous, there is an obligation to conduct a review of the means and methods of warfare in accordance with Article 36 of Additional Protocol I.
- During deployment of any new weapon system, including LAWS, the principles of distinction, proportionality and precautions in attack apply. Despite potential technical advances, of which we have heard examples in the previous sessions of this meeting, it is our assessment that weapon systems will not be capable of performing the subjective evaluations necessary to comply with these rules in the foreseeable future. Targeting decisions and other critical functions, including careful balancing of the principles of IHL, must therefore continue to be made by humans. Today, the technological limitations combined with the rules of IHL, if

followed properly, would therefore effectively preclude deployment of an autonomous weapon system.

- The possibility that autonomous weapons, following further technological development, at some point in the future might be able to select targets and use lethal force without human interaction raises unique issues. We are open to a discussion on what should be considered the outer limits of an acceptable evolution of autonomy/automation of these weapon systems.