Japan’s views on issues relating to LAWS

1 Japan is of the view that LAWS should be discussed with a focus on various aspects of technology, ethics, law and military affairs, and that it is not appropriate to draw any conclusions from only one of these aspects. We support the approach adopted at the second informal Meeting of Experts that the above aspects deliberated at the first Meeting of Experts are restructured and more specific issues are identified for further consideration.

2 Japan believes that it is important to clarify the definition of LAWS, but at the same time recognizes that reaching a consensus is not easy at this stage considering the outcomes of the informal Meeting in 2014. Therefore, we consider it useful to conduct in-depth discussions on the main elements of LAWS, such as autonomy and meaningful human control, which will be discussed at the second informal Meeting. Such discussions will facilitate a common understanding among the High Contracting Parties and lead to further discussions on the definition of LAWS. It is our understanding that in general, LAWS are a weapon capable of pursuing, without human intervention, autonomous deployment and recovery, identification of a target, judgment/decision of the attack and application of lethal force to the target, specifically a human target.

3 Among various points of discussions on LAWS, the dual-use of nature of robotic technologies should be continuously given particular importance. Robotic technologies, which have been extensively used in the areas of industries, disaster responses and healthcare etc., are bringing tremendous benefits for us all. The development and use of such technologies are expected to rapidly expand. Even though LAWS refer to weapons not robotics in civil use, it is not easy to decide where to draw the line between technical components in military use and those in civilian use. In the deliberation of LAWS, it is important to ensure the promotion, research and development of the peaceful and sound use of robots by drawing on the expertise and experiences gained in other regimes dealing with dual-use technologies. Japan’s Ministry of Defence has no plan to develop robots with humans out of the loop, which may be capable of committing murder.

4 Taking into account that the High Contracting Parties acknowledge that LAWS do not exist at this stage, we believe it is crucial for the Parties to develop a common understanding of elements of LAWS. Should such a common understanding be deepened as a result of the development of discussions at the second informal Meeting, we believe it is possible to have further advanced discussions on LAWS.

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