



**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR PEDRO MOTTA PINTO COELHO
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BRAZIL TO THE CONFERENCE ON
DISARMAMENT
CCW INFORMAL EXPERT MEETING
LETHAL AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS
GENEVA, 13 MAY 2014**

Mr. Chair,

I would like to congratulate you as we start this Informal Meeting of Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons. Brazil welcomes the French initiative to promote discussions within the CCW on this important matter. Brazil's decision to accept the invitation to participate as a Friend of the Chair demonstrates the priority we attach to this debate and our confidence in your able leadership. You can count on our full support.

Brazil was also glad to participate in the expert meeting on Lethal Autonomous Systems convened by the ICRC last April. We strongly believe that civil society plays a key role in this debate.

I would like to seize this opportunity to point out some fundamental aspects that should guide us during this meeting and in future debates on lethal autonomous systems.

As you all know, Brazil attaches high importance to multilateralism. We believe that permanent, universal and inclusive decisions on international issues can only be reached through multilateral means. In this regard, we understand that the CCW is the appropriate forum to discuss any future multilateral regime regarding the regulation of these weapons.

Taking into account the rapid pace of scientific developments regarding the autonomous systems, it is critical to ensure that all those new and emerging technologies are employed in the military field in conformity with Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law. Nevertheless, we would like to highlight that discussions within the CCW should not preclude other UN bodies, like the Human Rights Council, to consider and take actions on this issue, in accordance with their respective mandates.

The automation of the battlefield is not a new phenomenon and it seems to be an inevitable path. The increasing amount of money spent by governments and private sector in researches in autonomous systems is an unequivocal indicative of a technological trend that cannot be ignored. Many military experts support the idea of using this new technology in order to maximize the compliance with the IHL, reduce the number of human casualties

(combatants and non-combatants) and decrease their military budgets. Other experts sustain that the use of lethal autonomous systems would imply a “dehumanization of warfare”. They point out that ethical and moral standards require meaningful human supervision of decisions to take life. They also emphasize that key issues must be urgently addressed, such as the level of automation we aim to achieve and what functions of these lethal systems should not be allowed to operate autonomously.

Technological developments are most commonly associated with assets instead of liabilities. The fascination produced by technology shall not prevent us from raising relevant questions about the convenience and consequences of our future choices. Bearing this in mind, I would like to recall an ancient myth about a creature called “Golem”, I once heard when I was the Brazilian Ambassador in Tel Aviv. This story comes from the Jewish tradition and it has many versions. I will refer to a famous one, which mentions Judah Loew ben Bezalel, the late 16th century Rabbi of Prague. According to the legend, the Rabbi decided to create a magical creature out of clay to defend the Prague ghetto from anti-Semitic attacks. The creature had written on his front the word Emet (truth). One day, it went out of control on a murderous rampage, spreading fear among people from the ghetto. Facing the unpredictable behaviour of his creature and the difficulties to control it, the Rabbi decided to destroy the Golem by removing the first letter written on his front, composing the word Met (death).

Applied to present circumstances, this story hints that technology is not always the best solution for our challenges, especially when it relates to warfare. Good intentions, as the Rabbi’s attempt to protect his own people, can have unpredictable consequences. I am confident that the discussions during this informal meeting will be useful in our efforts to identify solutions to reconcile the military perspective of the use of lethal autonomous systems with the principles of International Humanitarian Law, Human Rights and ethical and moral imperatives.

Last but not least, I would like to refer to the Martens Clause. This formulation is a keystone of International Humanitarian Law. First articulated in late 19th century, it allows us to navigate safely new and dangerous waters, recalling that, in cases not covered by the law, the human person remains under the protection of the principles of humanity and the dictates of public conscience.

Thank you.