



General Statement

by

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First Meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts
on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems

Geneva, 13 to 17 November 2017

Mr. Chairman,

1. Thank you for convening us today for the first meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons. Germany welcomes this GGE as an opportunity for **stocktaking** on what has been achieved over the past three years of informal deliberations and for an exchange of views and positions among member states. Most importantly however we see this an opportunity for creating a **joint understanding** on how we want to deal with the questions raised by the development and use of future autonomous weapons as a **community of states**.
2. I would like to offer Germany's **appreciation and gratitude** for the extensive preparatory work done by the **Indian chair** of this first GGE. Your **Food-for-Thought-Paper** has been of great assistance in identifying many of the most relevant questions for our discussions here in Geneva. We highly welcome the **open and inclusive approach** you have taken in setting the frame of our deliberations by asking representatives of science, technology and industry from many parts of the world to join and share their insights with us.
3. GGE has been **mandated** by the High Contracting Parties to the CCW to "*explore and agree on possible recommendations on options related to emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapon systems in the context of the objectives and purposes of the Convention*". **Germany is ready to contribute actively** to this process building on its long standing commitment, among others as a chair of the 2015 and 2016 Expert Meetings on LAWS. Together with **France**, which has launched the expert meetings in 2014 we have developed a **joint position paper**, which has been shared with all of you last week.

4. We have submitted our joint proposal with the intention of offering a set of **possible concrete results** of the GGE-process, which we believe all of us could agree upon. While fully respecting the need for stocktaking at the outset of a formal GGE, it is our intention to make sure, that some of the valuable **substance, which previous informal meetings have produced** thanks to the contributions from many of the delegations present here today, gets fed into the current process.
5. At the heart of our proposal is the **recommendation for a political declaration**, which should affirm that State parties share the conviction that humans should continue to be able to make **ultimate decisions** with regard to the use of lethal force and should continue to exert sufficient control over lethal weapons systems they use. Moreover State parties should in our view recall that rules of international law, in particular international humanitarian law, are fully applicable to the development and use of LAWS.
6. Discussing the possibility of an all-encompassing **regulation or even a ban** as proposed by some states and civil society organisations is in our view **premature** at this point. These legal questions should be reconsidered at a later stage, as the technology of LAWS evolves. In the understanding that LAWS do not exist to date, the GGE may try to agree on a **preliminary working definition** for the purpose of discussions at the GGE, focusing on fully autonomous lethal weapons systems.
7. We believe that this GGE should consider exploring concrete options for **transparency and confidence building**. In our view voluntary measures that could increase confidence between States and enhance compliance with the existing regulations such as Article 36 of the Additional Protocol include establishing transparency and facilitating the identification of best-practices in conducting **weapons reviews** of future LAWS and exchanging information between States on future LAWS.
8. Building on the Political Declaration we propose that as a next step we should seek agreement on a **code of conduct** providing a politically binding set of rules for the development and use of LAWS.
9. Finally Germany is happy to see the discussions on LAWS taking place within the **framework of the CCW**. The strong consensus culture of this body, the tradition of close cooperation with military staff and its open framework allowing for participation of civil society make it the ideal forum for advancing this complex issue. We look forward to constructive discussions which will hopefully build momentum for a continuation of the GGE-process in early 2018 and, eventually, a political declaration as a first concrete result.