

Statement by Israel
By Mr. Eitan Levon
Representative to the Conference on Disarmament
Meeting of Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS)
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

At the outset, please allow me to congratulate you upon the assumption of the Chairmanship of the Meeting of Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS), and express our delegation's full cooperation and support in the fulfillment of your duties. We are confident that you will steer our deliberations to a successful outcome.

We have convened here this week to continue our discussions on emerging technologies in the area of LAWS within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. The CCW, as an IHL-focused framework, provides the appropriate forum to discuss future LAWS and advance the understanding of such systems. Deliberation under the auspices of the CCW, where the most relevant actors are present, has a real potential to effectively strike the appropriate balance between the humanitarian interest on the one hand, and military necessity on the other.

There is no doubt that discussing technologies that do not yet exist, is a challenging task requiring long-term vision, but at the same time, in order to have a serious discussion, requires us to be realistic in our assumptions relating to relevant future developments.

Mr. Chairman,

In our view, deliberations on future LAWS should be guided by several basic assumptions.

The first assumption relates to the necessity to maintain an open mind regarding both potential risks as well as possible positive capabilities of future LAWS. It is difficult to foresee today how autonomous capabilities may look like in ten, twenty or fifty years from now. As a consequence, any responsible discussion of future LAWS, should be undertaken in a cautious and prudent fashion.

The second assumption is that an assessment of such systems and of their employment should be conducted on a case by case basis. Future LAWS could take on a variety of forms, have a wide array of capabilities and nuances, and may be intended to operate in a range of operational environments, from the simplest ones to more complicated ones. Consequently, a serious deliberation on legal aspects of LAWS should take these factors into account.

A third assumption is that the use of future LAWS, as any other means of warfare, must comply with the applicable rules of IHL. In fact, prudent employment of LAWS may even promote compliance with IHL. In this context, it seems that states should, when considering a lethal autonomous weapon system, subject the system in question to an internal legal review. Such a review would consider the applicable rules of international law regarding the proposed system.

Mr. Chairman,

Israel welcomes the important work on LAWS conducted by this expert group. As do many other delegations, we also believe that the issue merits further work under the CCW framework, in order to more

thoroughly explore the various aspects relating to LAWS and their possible use during an armed conflict.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.