



# ICRC

**Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW)  
Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems  
9–13 April 2018, Geneva**

**Statement of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)**

*Possible options for addressing the humanitarian and international security challenges posed by emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems in the context of the objectives and purposes of the Convention without prejudging policy outcomes and taking into account past, present and future proposals*

Thank you, Mr Chair, and for ably guiding our work this week.

The ICRC is pleased with how discussions have progressed, and appreciate the constructive engagement of delegations, though clearly much work remains to be done if common understandings are to be reached on key issues by the GGE's next meeting in August.

Discussions on “policy options” should be grounded on three truisms:

Firstly, all new technologies of warfare must fit with existing law, not the other way around. Any weapon with autonomy in its critical functions of selecting and attacking targets must be capable of being used, and must be used, in accordance with international humanitarian law (IHL). This is undisputed. However, the unique implications of these weapons – namely the risk of loss of human control, and loss of human agency and intent, in targeting decisions -- raise unique challenges for legal compliance and for humanity, which in turn raise the question of whether new internationally agreed policies, standards or rules are needed.

Secondly, “policy options” must be informed by reality – the reality of how autonomy is being employed in weapon systems today and may be applied in the foreseeable future, and the evidence of the weapons' capabilities and limitations, their relative risks and benefits. Experience with existing weapon systems with autonomy in their critical functions can provide insights here.

Thirdly, the further weaponization of autonomy is not inevitable, it is a choice. And in making that choice, we must put humans – and their legal obligations and moral responsibilities – first, not technology.

Mr Chair

It is ICRC's view is that human control must be retained over weapon systems and the use of force and, therefore, the way forward should be determine the type and degree of human control necessary – in the use of weapon systems with autonomy in their critical functions – to ensure compliance with international (humanitarian) law, and ethical acceptability.

With general agreement that “meaningful”, “effective” or “appropriate” human control must be retained, this approach will enable States to

- establish meaningful, and internationally agreed, limits on autonomy in weapon systems that address legal, ethical and humanitarian concerns, and
- identify the specific characteristics of “autonomous weapon systems of concern”.

The criteria for the minimum level of human control should be driven by the necessity to preserve human judgement and responsibility in targeting decisions, where predictability and human supervision are important factors.

This may be seen as a positive obligation to ensure human control over weapon systems and the use of force, in line with legal obligations and ethical considerations. And, at this stage, the ICRC welcomes efforts to reach common understandings on the type and degree of human control required.

Thank you.