Consideration of the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on emerging technologies in the area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (agenda item 8).

Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

Meeting of High Contracting Parties

Geneva, Switzerland

13 November 2018

Statement by Ireland

Chair

1. Ireland aligns itself with Statement made by the EU and would like to add the following intervention in a national capacity.

2. My Delegation was encouraged by the progress made during the 2019 meetings of the Group of Government Experts (GGE) on Lethal Autonomous Weapons (LAWs). We were pleased that agreement was reached on an additional Guiding Principle this year and we look forward to their endorsement this week.

3. In turning more specifically to the content of report of the GGE, we welcome agreement on the importance of the human element in the use of weapons systems based on emerging technologies in the area of LAWS. We also welcome the conclusion that the role and impacts of autonomous functions in the identification, selection or engagement of a target are among the essential characteristics of LAWS and is central to the work of the GGE.

4. While the GGE concluded that reaching a common understanding on the concepts and characteristics of lethal autonomous weapons systems could aid further consideration of the aspects related to emerging technologies in the area of LAWS, we also welcome the recognition that the inability to converge on an agreed definition should not hamper efforts to address the challenges posed by LAWS.

Chair,

5. Ireland has remained consistent in our position on the need for human control in the use of force. We were pleased to note the recognition that human responsibility for decisions on the use of weapons systems must be retained since accountability cannot be transferred to machines and that this should be considered across the entire life cycle of the weapons system.
6. It is our view that we should now focus our discussions on the type and degree of human involvement required to ensure that possible emerging weapons systems, with an increasing level of autonomous functions, are compatible with the requirements of international law, in particular IHL.

Chair,

7. Ireland supports the continuation of the GGE’s work in 2020 and 2021 with the aim to achieve further substantive progress. Ireland supports a meeting of the GGE on LAWs for a total duration of 30 days in 2020 and 2021. This duration is needed to continue our work in a meaningful way.

8. In considering the options presented in the report of the GGE, my delegation sees scope for regulation of weapon systems that incorporate emerging technologies with increasingly autonomous functions to ensure compliance with International Humanitarian Law, International Human Rights Law and other provisions of international law. We also see merit in agreeing a political declaration within the CCW in order to provide a firm collective basis for future work towards addressing this constantly evolving issue. The fast-pace of current technological developments present a compelling incentive for us to accelerate our efforts next year.

Thank You