



Kingdom of the Netherlands

Statement of the Netherlands

delivered by

**H.E. Robbert Gabriëlse, Permanent Representative to the Conference
on Disarmament**

at

Group of Governmental Experts on LAWS

General Statement

Geneva, 9 April 2018

Thank you Mr. Chair.

The Netherlands aligns itself with the statement delivered by the EU and would like to make some remarks in its national capacity.

Let me start by thanking you, Mr. Chair, for your continued leadership under which we are confident that we will move forward with the international debate on autonomous weapon systems. We would also like to thank all those States that have submitted working papers to deepen and strengthen the debate. It is important to address both opportunities as well as challenges. In that respect, we welcome the working paper of the US which illustrates that increased autonomy in weapon systems could also have humanitarian benefits. At the same time, there is a risk that increased autonomy will lead to humanitarian suffering. This clearly shows how complex and multifaceted this topic is. Therefore the Netherlands believes foremost that further discussion of the concept of meaningful human control is essential. In that respect, I also would like to draw the attention to delegations to a side event sponsored by the Netherlands, titled *The Human-Machine Relationship: Lessons from Military Doctrine and Operations*. This side event is organised by the Center for Autonomy and AI (CNA) and VU University Amsterdam and will be held this Tuesday during lunch time.

Mr. Chair,

Expert Meetings in previous years, as well as the first meeting of the Groups of Governmental Experts (GGE) in November last year, significantly deepened our understanding. Reality is, however, that the international discussion is only progressing gradually. It is therefore important to keep this topic on the international agenda and we consequently welcome the ongoing deliberations within this Convention.

Although there are many potential topics to be discussed, the Netherlands feels that special attention should be paid to:

- Further discussions of the concept of meaningful human control, which in the Netherlands' view is required in the deployment of autonomous weapon systems. We therefore look forward to the discussions this week on the human element in relation to LAWS.
- The unanimous conclusion by the High Contracting Parties that all weapon systems, including LAWS, and their deployment in armed conflict, must comply with the requirements set by international law, in particular International Humanitarian Law. In this light, we encourage all states to fulfil their obligations under article 36 of the First Additional Protocol of the Geneva Conventions on legal reviews.
- In the context of the rapid scientific and technological developments in the field of artificial intelligence, we would like to address the importance of 'responsible innovation'. This means responsible design, test and usage of autonomous weapon systems.
- Finally, to facilitate the debate, the establishment of *working* definitions, or at least a clear characterization of autonomous weapons systems, is useful. States Parties should reduce the confusion in the debate through differences in interpretation. However, these efforts should in no way prejudice the outcome of the discussion, nor the topics being discussed.

Mr. Chair, the Netherlands stands ready to actively contribute to the discussions this week. To further facilitate these discussions we have submitted during last GGE meeting a working paper with the Netherlands' national position on this topic and more specifically we prepared a working paper on weapons review mechanisms together with Switzerland, in order to contribute to the discussions on article 36 legal review implementation. Both papers are still actual.

We look forward to the interesting panels and the following fruitful discussions.

Thank you Mr. Chair.