

**Statement by the Russian Delegation on Agenda Item 8 of the Meeting of the
States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons
“Consideration of the Report of the Group of Governmental Experts on
Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems»
(Geneva, 22 November 2017)**

Mr. Chairman,

The Russian delegation has taken an active part in the first session of the CCW Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems notwithstanding the skeptical attitude that we still retain towards the prospects of considering this topic in the GGE.

Our experts participated in all panel discussions of the Group devoted to technological, international legal, military and political aspects of such weapons.

On the whole, we consider that the work of the GGE on LAWS under the presidency of the Indian Ambassador A. Gill was efficient. In particular, we welcome the attention drawn by the GGE to such new aspects as the ongoing research into artificial intelligence and civil technologies with a high level of autonomy. Most importantly, in the course of its work the GGE demonstrated the fact that the Convention was the optimal format for addressing the issue of LAWS as well as the applicability of international humanitarian law to such weapons and the imperative of further considering such issues as the dual nature of such technologies equally relevant to civil and military use, the relationship between machines and humans, etc.

At the same time, we have not managed to overcome some serious problems in our discussion.

We believe that the key problem is the absence of an approved working definition and characteristics of such systems. Today our understanding of LAWS largely depends on the interpretation of each delegation. There are states that include semiautonomous and automated systems into this category and consider that such systems already exist and are widely used. Others argue that there are no such systems. It seems that in the context of such uncertainty it is very premature to speak about any specific and even intermediate results of our work.

Moreover, our delegation cannot agree with the alarmist assessments predicting that fully autonomous weapons systems will inevitably emerge in the coming years. According to our experts, a significant amount of time is required for bringing artificial intelligence systems to the level of “singularity” or “superintelligence”. This is not only Russian experts’ point of view. In the course of the GGE session we have many times heard the assessments of competent experts arguing that the mankind is far from solving the riddle of human conscience and creating fully autonomous weapons systems.

The previous GGE session revealed quite a complex situation regarding other issues. As for future work, we are convinced that we should act gradually. The theme of our discussion is very complicated and multi-faceted, and we need to take a closer look at it. Such work should be done on the step-by-step basis. These steps should be small. The agreement should be achieved gradually. It’s better not to be in a hurry

but rather underline the substance. In our view, such important documents as the political declaration, for instance, lack substance.

Our delegation attaches primary importance to the fact that GGE activities had no negative impact on human capabilities to freely develop robotics and artificial intelligence technologies. We should acquire an in-depth understanding of weapons aspects of highly autonomous systems which could become an important instrument for defense and protection of national interests. Moreover, the international legal aspects of LAWS need to be further considered as well as the issue of the sufficiency of the current IHL to lift persisting concerns with regard to such weapons systems. In general, we believe the GGE final document is quite well-balanced and, most importantly, reflecting the real stage of our discussion. We managed to reflect the basic understandings that we have at the present moment. In spite of the doubts that we retain on the timeliness of the discussion of this topic within the framework of the GGE and the prospective results of the GGE work and given the consensus reached, we would not have any objections to the fact that the Group will continue its work preserving the research mandate.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman