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Statement by

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The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW)
GGE on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS)

General Debate

United Nations, Geneva

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Ambassador Gill, upon the assumption of the Chairmanship of this Meeting of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS) and to thank High Contracting Parties who have submitted working papers which serve as good background to our discussions.

Mr. Chairman,

The CCW has been conducting dedicated deliberations on the issue of future LAWS since 2014, and it is Israel's view that it continues to be the appropriate forum for discussions on this matter, as it is an IHL-focused framework that hosts the most relevant actors. Previous experts' meetings were useful and provided insights into the technological, legal and ethical aspects of LAWS, as well as to their possible humanitarian and military aspects. It seems clear that these discussions promoted a greater understanding of the issue. As this issue is continuously evolving, we see merit in continuing them, without prejudging any possible outcome. Given the complexity of the topic, the speculative nature of the subject matter and the different opinions relating to such systems, it is Israel's view that our approach must be prudent and incremental.

Mr. Chairman,

In discussing LAWS, High Contracting Parties should take into account the fact that capabilities and limitations of such future systems have yet to be discovered, and that it is simply impossible to predict how autonomy will look in the future. Thus, a serious and responsible discussion on LAWS should be conducted in an open-minded and realistic manner, while avoiding unsubstantiated determinations as to the inability of future LAWS to be employed in a way that would comply with IHL, as well as avoiding the apocalyptic images. Development of rigid standards or imposing prohibitions to something that is so speculative at this early stage, would be imprudent and may yield an uninformed, misguided result. Yet, we reiterate that whatever characteristics these future systems may have, they, like any other means of warfare, will never be used outside the law, but will be subject to the existing rules of international humanitarian law.

Mr. Chairman,

Israel states again that it is not supportive of a preemptive ban on LAWS. The CCW should continue following the technological development of this issue with patience and a goal of learning, until we have the sense we know enough to take informed decisions. As mentioned by other delegations before, an issue that we could take into closer consideration even at this early stage, without prejudging any future decisions, is the issue of legal reviews of new weapons at the national level, which seem as a useful practice aiming to examine the legality of future LAWS.



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Israel looks forward to this year's GGE and hopes that, contrary to previous year, our work in 2018 will last for 2 weeks, in accordance with the timeframe agreed upon.

I thank you.



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Right of Reply:

Mr. Chairman.

Israel wishes to express its appreciation to the professional manner in which the discussions were held during thus far.

Israel regrets the exploitation of this distinguished forum by one of the previous speakers for political purposes. Clearly ,that speaker may not be familiar, or does not care, about the dominant professional and non-political nature of the CCW, especially this current forum of a meeting of experts. Baseless claims are easy to present; Contributing substantively to the CCW work is much more difficult, but much more necessary. Israel suggests to continue and focus our work on future LAWS.

Regarding the participation of the Palestinian delegation in this meeting, Israel would like to reiterate its letter submitted to the Secretary General in his capacity as depository to the CCW, dated January 16, 2015.

I thank you.