

CCW Informal Meeting of Experts on LAWS

IRELAND

Draft Statement on Definitions – 12.04.2016

Thank you Chair

And thanks in particular to you and your panellists for generating and sustaining a very valuable discussion on the challenges presented by developing a definition to help guide our work. We see much merit in the proposal advanced in the Swiss paper on developing a working definition without prejudice to future restrictions or prohibitions on weapons use and which has also been welcomed by a number of other delegations.

My delegation has noted a range of overlapping nuances and assumptions made by states during interventions throughout this process. For example some delegations have stated that Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems do not exist at present and others say that fully Autonomous Weapons Systems do not exist and may even never exist. This flexible terminology has been helpful in allowing states to engage in the process from their own perspective but if we are to move on to more substantive discussions we will need an agreed basis for that work. In that regard Mr Chairman we have found the Swiss paper particularly relevant.

As this is a weapons-specific convention it would be appropriate to start with a working definition of Autonomous Weapons Systems and that then could be a basis for addressing Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems or Fully Autonomous Weapons Systems or other sub-sets of the overall universe of Autonomous Weapons Systems.

We also recognise that the concepts of automation and automatic functioning have also been used frequently in our discussions. I would like to ask the panel to clarify how they would differentiate between automatic, automated and autonomous, and if indeed such differentiation is necessary. Also I would like to hear their views on whether they see a clear line between non-autonomous and autonomous or whether they see a continuum of different levels of autonomy from non-autonomous to fully autonomous,

Thank you Chair