



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

**UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN  
AND NORTHERN IRELAND**

**STATEMENT**

to the

**Informal Meeting of Experts  
on  
Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems**

11 - 15 April 2016

Please check against delivery

## General Debate

Mr Chairman,

1. Firstly thank you for all your excellent preparation for this meeting. The programme is comprehensive, covering the key aspects from definitions of concepts and mapping autonomy, to the legal, moral, ethical and security considerations that require further discussion. I would also like to thank all those states that have submitted working papers.
2. The UK is of the view that these discussions are relevant and timely. We also believe that the CCW is the right forum for this discussion.
3. The UK wishes to reiterate its policy on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS). The UK believes that LAWS do not, and may never, exist. Furthermore, we have no intention of ever developing systems that could operate without **any** human control. The UK is committed to ensuring its weapons remain under human control. We encourage other States to share their national policy and approach on LAWS.
4. Over the coming days, the UK hopes that we make progress in some of the following areas:
5. Firstly, in considering the importance and relevance of existing international humanitarian law. From our perspective, to discuss LAWS is to discuss means and methods of warfare. As such, international humanitarian law provides the appropriate paradigm for this discussion. To that end, we look forward to sharing our views and hearing about other states' experiences on the process of Legal Weapons Review - a process which has been developed exactly for circumstances such as where the legality of new and novel weapons technologies needs to be thoroughly assessed and understood.
6. Secondly, we hope that the session on mapping will provide us with a realistic overview of the current state of the art in robotics and artificial intelligence. It is important that our discussions are grounded in a realistic assessment of the limits and, perhaps more importantly, the legitimate possibilities and applications of technology.
7. Thirdly, the discussion on the characteristics of LAWS will be an important one. Within this debate it is important to remember that the CCW has been tasked with considering *emerging* technologies. To that end, we should exchange views about what is and what is not an autonomous weapons

system, a subject where clear, careful definitions and common understandings of their meaning and application will be critical.

8. Fourthly, we are looking forward to hearing further consideration of the wider potential implications of LAWS. The CCW remains the right forum to bring together the most relevant expertise to address this issue.
9. With regard to the recommendations that we might put forward at the end of the week, the UK would like to see agreement that future discussions should work towards:
  - Agreeing the relevance and importance of existing international humanitarian law to this debate.
  - Reaffirming key principles of IHL and commitment to increase compliance with those principles, including the importance of Legal Weapons Reviews.
  - Commitment to working towards a definition of LAWS consistent with the mandate of the discussion.
10. Mr Chairman, we look forward to five days of fruitful discussions under your leadership, and to providing more detailed comments on specific elements of the discussion throughout the week. Thank you.