



Federal Republic of Germany  
Foreign Office

## **CCW EXPERT MEETING LETHAL AUTONOMOUS WEAPON SYSTEMS**

Geneva, 13 – 16 May 2014

### **Statement Wrap-up Session by Michael Biontino**

Mr. Chairperson,

First of all, Germany wants to congratulate you for a very successful expert meeting on lethal autonomous weapons systems. We want to thank you, your staff and the secretariat for the hard work invested in the preparation of this conference.

During the last four days, we have intensively debated the topic of lethal autonomous weapons systems taking it from very different angles: the technical, the ethical, the legal and the military-operational. The debate greatly benefitted from openness as well as the active participation of civil society.

As this was the first in-depth discussion of lethal autonomous weapons systems in the framework of CCW, Germany did not expect to go home today having all the answers. But our lively discussions have indicated a lot of useful points we should continue our debate upon. Therefore, Germany would very much welcome if this work could be continued in the CCW.

Mr. Chairperson,

Germany stressed already in its first statement during this conference the importance of maintaining meaningful human control over decisions of life and death. We were

very pleased to see that this opinion was widely shared by the participants of this working group. However, in future discussions, we will have to define what this meaningful human control may entail.

During the last four days, we have talked a lot about autonomy versus automation, and the difficulty to exactly define autonomy. We will have to work further on that in order to come to a common understanding about terminology. We should also look into another criterion of lethal autonomous weapons systems: lethality. We think this could help us in understanding the key concern in relation to LAWS: the autonomous targeting and engaging of human targets.

The debate also showed a feeling that greater transparency was needed. We acknowledge that transparency in military matters is a difficult as well as sensitive issue and has to be balanced with our operational security needs. But, nevertheless, we believe that it merits more discussions. Could it be possible to create more transparency about national policies with regard to new weapons systems as well as transparency about the mechanisms to test and validate these weapons systems before deployment? The Article 36-reviews may play an important role.

Another topic for further discussions is, in our eyes, the possible consequences of the emergence of lethal autonomous weapons systems for arms control regimes, a point very dear to us. Would such weapons systems influence the stability we have achieved in the existing arms control regimes? How could proliferation risks be best addressed? We do not have an answer at this point, but we do consider this a very important aspect.

Mr. Chairperson

We could quote many more topics that were raised during the last days and that merit further in-depth discussions. In general, the last days showed us a wide amount of aspects and factors to be considered when we talk about LAWS and their possible

effects, which can only be fully assessed in view of future technological developments. Therefore, we believe a cautious and analytic approach is necessary. Germany believes that the topic of lethal autonomous weapons systems should remain on the agenda of the CCW and we look very much forward to upcoming meetings like this one.