



Permanent Representation
of the Federal Republic of Germany
to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva

Introductory Statement

by

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II INFORMAL MEETING OF EXPERTS ON LETHAL AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS SYSTEMS

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

It is my great pleasure to join with Ambassador Tehmina Janjua in welcoming delegations to the CCW Informal Meeting of Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS). After Ambassador Simon-Michel of France chaired the first meeting in 2014, this is now the third meeting on LAWS. This week our task is “to discuss further the questions related to emerging technologies in the area of LAWS, in the context of the objectives and purposes of the Convention of Certain Conventional Weapons”. There is a general understanding that the 2016 Meeting of Experts should build on the outcomes of the preceding meetings in 2014 and 2015, focus on key issues and allow for a deepened discussion. Furthermore, the consideration of the different aspects of LAWS in the CCW has advanced to the stage where - inspired and supplemented by expert panels – we should strive for policy oriented discussions and agree on recommendations for further work within the framework of the CCW.

I will not go into the details of our programme. However let me highlight a number of central elements.

Under the session on “Mapping autonomy”, we will strive to gain a better understanding of what actual developments are taking place or are to be expected concerning autonomous systems in general and in particular in the military sphere.

Furthermore, we will try to make progress “Towards a working definition of LAWS”. Our ambition should be to examine the concepts put forward so far, in more detail with a view to refining them and to identifying first approaches to operationalizing them for an eventual practical definition.

A central element in our proceedings will be the complex challenges to International Humanitarian LAW (IHL) and in particular Art. 36 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. A detailed discussion, in particular of legal weapons reviews, should provide insights into the more general implications of IHL with respect to LAWS.

Human rights and ethical issues concerning the development and possible deployment of LAWS constitute a further very important issue to be discussed.

Last, but not least, security issues remain a core concern in the discussion on LAWS.

As we commence our expert meeting, I would like to share my perception of where we stand right now. It seems that from the 2014 and 2015 meetings common ground on a number of general principles is emerging.

It was an area of universal appreciation last year that any weapon system, regardless of its level of autonomy, must always strictly observe the rules of international law, particularly international humanitarian law. Additionally, it was recognized that legal weapons reviews are central in ensuring compliance with IHL.

There was a widely shared view that the decision over the use of lethal force shall never be delegated to autonomous weapons systems without the possibility of human intervention.

I also sensed there is common agreement that the legal and political responsibility for any action by any weapon system remains always with the state using the system and that there always has to be an unequivocal accountability chain for the use of any weapon system.

There appears to be wide agreement that the CCW is the appropriate forum for dealing with these issues.

Furthermore, we are faced with the challenge that the potential development and deployment of LAWS could raise serious legal, ethical and general security issues which should be closely monitored and this is an issue that must remain on the CCW's agenda.

In this regard, our discussions have been very much enhanced by civil society organizations, researchers and scientific organizations by shedding light on the possible implications of LAWS and I hope they will continue to do so.

It is clear that there are numerous issues that merit further consideration, particularly in the context of technological developments, definitions, IHL, Human Rights law, ethics, and global security. I am very much looking forward to continuing the discussions on these issues this week.

It is my sincere hope that these discussions will help us agree on how to make forward progress on LAWS in the CCW. As you know, we, "*may agree by consensus on recommendations for further work for consideration by the 2016 Fifth Review Conference*". I consider this mandate an opportunity to further clarify where we have common ground.

The issue of convening a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on LAWS was already raised last year. A large number of voices stated that a GGE could indeed be considered as the next logical step. This is valid in particular, since we might not gain full clarity on all issues during this week. Such a GGE could deal with these complex topics in more detail. It could, for example, refine the above mentioned general principles and work on a definition of LAWS. In addition, a GGE might look ahead and explore options on how to deal with LAWS in the CCW framework. Convening a GGE would demonstrate to the outside world that CCW States Parties are elevating their work on LAWS by moving a more formal process.

During this morning's general debate, which is an opportunity for States to share their positions on national policies and legal provisions concerning LAWS and to outline expectations regarding the possible recommendations, I will be listening carefully to all views put forward. Following the general exchange and later this afternoon, it is my intention to share with you all a first draft of the recommendations. For the discussion and possible adoption of consensual recommendations, I propose that we have a first round of informal consultations on Wednesday, 13 April, after our formal meeting ends. These consultations will be open ended and will take place in the same format as we meet here right now. However I am very much open, as well, to those delegations who wish to discuss their suggestions on a bilateral basis and invite them to approach me directly.

In the coming days, I look forward to an interactive discussion and active participation by all delegations.

I now open the floor now for the General Debate and first on the speakers is [...]