

Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS)  
November 13-17, 2016  
Opening Statement

Thank you Mr. Chairman

- The United States welcomes the establishment of this GGE. We found the panel presentations informative and look forward to the discussion among States this week. The CCW is uniquely suited to hold these discussions, given its focus on international humanitarian law (IHL) and given that delegations of High Contracting Parties routinely include members with military, technical, and policy experience.
- Mr. Chairman we wish to thank you for your efforts to arrange and guide this GGE. We believe that this substantive review of the technological, military, and legal/ethical considerations associated with emerging technologies relevant to LAWS is a valuable contribution to the work of the CCW. Our discussions have provided plenty of food for thought and it is clear that many governments, including that of the United States, are still trying to understand more fully the ways that autonomy will be used by their societies, including by their militaries. These are complex issues, and we need to continue to educate ourselves.
- One thing is clear: any development or use of LAWS must be fully consistent with IHL, including the principles of humanity, distinction, and proportionality. For this reason, the United States places great importance on the weapon review process in the development and acquisition of new weapon systems. This is a critical measure in ensuring that weapon systems can dependably be used in a manner that is consistent with IHL. We continue to believe that best practices for reviewing weapon systems that use autonomy are an especially productive area for continued discussions, as a number of other delegations have also suggested.
- The United States also continues to believe that advances in autonomy and machine learning can facilitate and enhance the implementation of IHL, including the principles of distinction and proportionality. One of our goals is thus to understand better how this technology can continue to be used to reduce the risk to civilians and friendly forces in armed conflict. On this issue, we refer other delegations to the United States working paper.
- The United States is committed to playing an active and constructive role in this GGE, including by sharing our experience in addressing issues related to autonomy in weapon systems. We expect this conversation will greatly contribute to States' and the public's understandings of the challenges and

benefits that could be presented by LAWS. We share the frustration expressed by other delegations that a week of meetings was canceled this year. Given the importance of these discussions, the United States would support renewing the current discussion mandate in 2018.

- It remains premature, however, to consider where these discussions might or should ultimately lead. For this reason, we do not support the negotiation of a political or legally binding document at this time. The issues presented by LAWS are complex and evolving, as new technologies and their applications continue to be developed. We must be cautious not to make hasty judgments about the value or likely effects of emerging or future technologies. As history shows, our views of new technologies may change over time as we find new uses and ways to benefit from advances in technology. In particular, we want to encourage innovation and progress in furthering the objects and purposes of the Convention. We should therefore proceed with deliberation and patience.