

First Session of the CCW Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, 9-13 April 2018

Agenda item 6(d): Possible options for addressing the humanitarian and international security challenges posed by emerging technologies in the area of LAWS in the context of the objectives and purposes of the Convention without prejudging policy outcomes and taking into account past, present and future proposals (13 April 2018)

Statement by Ambassador Farukh Amil Permanent Representative of PAKISTAN

Mr. Chairperson,

Let me begin by commending your steering of the GGE this week. Credit goes to you for facilitating a frank and interactive debate, at times outside of our usual comfort zones. We appreciate the numerous contributions and interventions made by various delegations which helped us in gaining a better understanding of the various perspectives.

We also thank the ICRC and civil society representatives present in the room for their engagement with this important topic. The seminal work and advocacy done by the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots composed of a broad coalition of non-governmental organizations and academics has been critical in raising awareness and bringing key issues to the attention of policy makers and the general public. We have certainly benefitted from their inputs and would encourage them to continue this work despite the frustratingly slow pace of progress.

Mr. Chairperson,

The meeting this week showed that while there are still significant divergences between the positions of member states, some areas of convergence are also emerging. For instance, it is now widely recognized that:

one, LAWS are unique and novel weapons systems that have given rise to multi-faceted concerns, especially related to their humanitarian and security dimension, which need to be addressed multilaterally. National regulations and responses are not enough to deal with them; and

two, human control on the use of weapons with autonomous functions has been deemed as essential. The need now is to ascertain the scope and extent of human control that would satisfy all concerns related to the humanitarian and security dimension of LAWS.

A crucial element for taking this work further forward would be to agree on a policy-neutral and simple working definition that would serve as a common understanding on the weapons systems under consideration. This should indeed be among the priorities of States Parties in the future.

Mr. Chairperson,

Although my delegation would have preferred a more ambitious mandate, this GGE was tasked to develop possible options for addressing the humanitarian and international security challenges posed by emerging technologies in the area of LAWS, while considering elements of their characterization, human-machine interface and potential military applications.

This week, we again observed a large majority of States, including my own, express the strong desire to pursue a legally binding instrument stipulating prohibitions and regulations on LAWS. This should clearly be listed as the first option.

Another opinion voiced during the meeting was to explore the possibility of non-legally binding and transparency and confidence building measures. This could be listed as the second option, even though we see this only as an interim step towards a legally-binding instrument.

We also heard some States, primarily those that are believed to be actively researching and developing such weapons, to do nothing at this stage. We do not find convincing the argument that LAWS do not currently exist, and banning or regulating prospective weapons systems based on an evolving technology would not be appropriate. Nevertheless, this particular viewpoint could be listed as the third option.

Mr. Chairperson,

At this stage of our deliberations, after nearly five years of expert-level consideration, further procrastination should not be an option. Whilst weapon systems with Artificial Intelligence and increasingly autonomous functions are fast becoming a reality, we have not been able to resolve the host of legal, ethical and security concerns associated with them.

States Parties have attained a sufficient degree of common understanding on the various aspects of such weapons. The discussions held this week contributed to further refining this understanding. We need to shift gears now and move towards the development of concrete policy recommendations, which should be the prime focus of the GGE during the next session at the end of August. My delegation will engage with that process in a constructive and cooperative manner to garner consensus.

Mr. Chairperson,

Over time, the concerns surrounding LAWS have exacerbated and become more pronounced. Despite attempts by the technology holders to point out the virtues of doing nothing at this stage, the international community at large is not ready to sit idle. The consequences, especially on international peace and security, are simply too grave to be ignored. This process launched within the CCW can only be sustained if it is result-oriented and seen to be heeding the concerns of all member states.

I thank you, Mr. Chairperson.