



## Meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems Geneva, 9 to 13 April 2018

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### Statement by France and Germany (under Agenda Item “General Exchange of Views”)

Mr. Chairman,

1. Thank you for convening us today for the first meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons in 2018. France and Germany will deliver a joint statement. My German colleague, Ambassador Biontino, will read the second part of this statement.
2. In light of the continuing rapid advances of autonomous technology in the context of LAWS, France and Germany believe this GGE to be as relevant and useful as ever, and very much welcome the timely work of the CCW.

We welcome the substantial topics you have chosen to focus on, Mr Chairman, and hope that, on that basis, this GGE will be able to build consensus on concrete recommendations for options related to LAWS, as foreseen by the mandate given to this GGE by the High Contracting Parties to the CCW.

3. France and Germany welcome that the agenda of the 2018 GGE allows us to make progress on some of the crucial issues that need to be agreed upon in order to allow for the elaboration of joint conclusions, namely
  - finding a working definition which is acceptable to all parties,
  - discussing the key issues of the human element in the use of lethal force and
  - exploring the field of human / machine interaction.

France and Germany also believe it is very timely to explore possible options to address the international security challenges posed by LAWS.

4. France and Germany have already submitted a joint proposal with the ambition to contribute to the reflection on the outcome of the GGE-process. At the heart of our proposal is the recommendation for a political declaration, which should affirm that State parties share the conviction that humans should continue to be able to make ultimate decisions with regard to the use of lethal force and should continue to exert sufficient control over lethal weapons systems they use.

Mr. Chairman,

5. In addition to this point, allow me to mention a few of the strong views shared by France and Germany with regards to LAWS:
6. The rules of international law, in particular international humanitarian law, are fully applicable to the development and use of potential LAWS.
7. With regards to the defining LAWS France and Germany would like to underline understanding that the object of our discussions is limited to fully autonomous weapons, which do not exist to date.
8. In that context, we want to highlight the critical importance of conducting rigorous weapon reviews as required by IHL.

Only new weapons that have been tested, legally reviewed and that could be employed in compliance with IHL are acceptable means of warfare.

As an additional guarantee, we want to recall that humans should exert sufficient control over the weapons they use.

In looking at the necessary human/machine-interaction we believe it is worth mentioning two points:

- The human should maintain the overall responsibility.

- The subordination of a weapon system to a chain of command must be assured.
9. Please allow me to finally make some remarks on the military-security dimension, which will also be on the agenda of our deliberations this week. As every new technology implemented in military weapon systems, “autonomy” has the potential to feed or make emerge new challenges. Although technological progress can enable a better implementation of IHL and reduce humanitarian concerns, there might also be challenges for security policy and the prevention of proliferation.
  10. For these reasons the international community has been asked to take steps to mitigate the concerns of arms proliferation as well as other potentially adverse effects in the field of LAWS, for example by a Political Declaration and by voluntary transparency and confidence-building measures as explored by the Franco-German Paper submitted to the 2017 GGE.
  11. FRANCE and GERMANY will make further proposals along the lines of our proposal from last Fall in due course. As two former chairs of expert discussions on LAWS, we are keen on contributing in a meaningful manner to the work you are now so ably chairing in order to build consensus on how to deal with this issue in a realistic and satisfactory way.
  12. We look forward to constructive discussions around our proposals as well as the recommendations put forward by other delegations. Let us work together in creating momentum for a constructive and result-oriented continuation of the GGE-process in 2018 and a political declaration as a first concrete result.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.