



**CCW Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems
Geneva (9 – 13 April 2018)**

**Statement by Ambassador Gianfranco Incarnato
Permanent Representative of Italy to the Conference on Disarmament**

General exchange of views

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, let me express my deep appreciation for your appointment and assure you of my delegation's full cooperation towards a productive outcome of this GGE session.

Italy aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Mr. Chairman,

Italy has consistently supported the CCW as the natural forum to explore the features and implications of "Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems"/LAWS, due to its inclusion of diplomatic, legal, and military expertise, the balance it strikes between humanitarian considerations and military necessity, as well as its openness to the input of civil society and research institutions.

The important conclusions and recommendations we agreed at the first GGE Meeting last November support this view. They represent an extremely useful basis for our work during the current session. We will engage with all States Parties in order to achieve concrete progress and further deepen our understanding of the various aspects relating to this issue, also in the light of current technological developments.

While I will elaborate in the next days on the items of the agenda we have just approved, I will now seize this occasion to state the key elements of Italy's position.

First, international humanitarian law continues to apply fully to all weapons systems, including the potential development and use of LAWS. To this aim, conducting legal reviews of weapons, means and methods of warfare, in accordance with art. 36 of the Additional Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions remains essential.

In Italy, the legal basis for such review is set in the Code of Military Organization of 2010. The review process is conducted by the Ministry of Defense in conjunction with the Defense Committees of the Italian Senate and Chamber of Deputies (the two Parliament branches). In particular, the Italian MoD is required to obtain a prior approval from both

Committees in order to earmark the budget and activate the procurement procedures relating to the study, development, acquisition or adoption of any new weapons system and the modernization of current military assets.. The overall process is highly transparent since parliamentarians are in a position to assess any new defense investment against a set of criteria, explicitly including compliance with IHL of the concerned weapons system. Their assessment is recorded and is available to the general public and media.

Second, for Italy it is paramount that the ultimate decision to use lethal force and to produce lethal effects fully remains in the hands of human beings. This means that humans should continue to exert relevant control over the lethal weapons systems they use.

Third, we need to be aware that progress in civilian research, development and use of dual-use technologies should not be hampered by excessive regulation.

Mr. Chairman,

On the basis of the three considerations that I have just mentioned, it is our view that our debate in terms of the characterization of LAWS should focus on those lethal weapons systems which are fully autonomous with a view to trying to agree on a preliminary working definition for the purpose of our discussions. These offensive systems – that do not yet exist, but could possibly be developed in the future – pose problems of compatibility with IHL rules.

Mr. Chairman,

In terms of the possible outcomes for the GGE, we think that drafting a political declaration which sets basic agreed principles and lays the ground for further work on the issue is an interesting proposal, which deserves in-depth consideration.

More generally, we acknowledge that several suggestions have been presented last year, as well as in working papers tabled by some delegations for the current session of the Group. We remain open to further discuss them, and other options for possible next steps that may emerge from our debate this week, with a view to agreeing on a possible way forward.

Thank you.