

## **LAWS GGE April 2018**

### **Australian Statement - General Exchange of Views**

Mr Chairman,

Australia welcomes the second meeting in the GGE process here in Geneva. We would like to congratulate you, Ambassador Gill on the skilful way in which you have navigated us through these complex discussions. We applaud the measured and constructive manner in which you have presided over our deliberations. I would like to assure you of Australia's full support.

The international community has been considering the technical, legal and ethical issues arising from development of autonomous weapons including Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) for a number of years. We hope over the course of this GGE that we can flesh out a common understanding on the characteristics of LAWS.

Mr Chairman,

We recognise the potential value which autonomy brings to military and civilian technologies. Systems with advanced artificial intelligence and enhanced autonomous functions are becoming increasingly more prevalent in both contexts. In particular, we understand that militaries throughout the world are incorporating ever more automation into their systems. This is not new or surprising. We welcome discussions on how such technological advances in weapon systems will comply with International Humanitarian Law (IHL), increase precision, and support commanders fulfil their obligations to IHL on the battlefield.

We see the legal framework for reviewing new weapons, means and methods of warfare, under Article 36 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, as being of particular importance in ensuring this compliance. We should not overlook or under-value article 36 reviews.

Australia would like to encourage in-depth discussion of Article 36 reviews. As a party to Additional Protocol I, Australia fully supports and adheres to the obligation to undertake a review of any new weapon, means or method of warfare, to determine whether its employment would, in some, or all circumstances, be prohibited by IHL or other international law by which Australia is bound.

Mr Chairman,

We also consider it important for the GGE to address the challenges arising from the dual use nature of autonomous technology. Where governments were previously at the forefront of technological breakthroughs in support of military or civilian applications, private companies are now leading in many areas. Technology, designed for civilian use, may easily be converted for military use and vice versa. Speakers before me this morning have spoken of the need to protect and promote the benefits of such technology.

Mr Chairman,

We look forward to in-depth discussions this week on the technological, military, legal and ethical dimensions of emerging technologies in the area of LAWS.

Thank you, Mr Chairman