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Statement by

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The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW)
GGE on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS)

Human Machine Interface

United Nations, Geneva

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

In Israel's view, the shared starting point for this discussion must be that all weapons, including LAWS, are and will always be utilized by humans. We should stay away from imaginary visions where machines develop, create or activate themselves – these should be left for science-fiction movies. As far as terminology is concerned, that means that LAWS should not be regarded as "deciding" anything. Humans are always those who decide, and LAWS are decided upon.

On this premise, the analysis of human-machine interface relating to LAWS should be divided into two chronological stages – first, the development and acquisition process of LAWS; second, the operational planning and deployment stage.

As for the first stage, humans will always be in charge of any process to develop and acquire LAWS, including the various phases of the research, development, programming, testing, technical and legal review, and approval of such systems. During these phases, humans will determine exactly how LAWS will operate. For example, they may program the weapon to detect and attack only specific types of targets, such as combat aircraft or tanks. As with any other weapon, the persons involved should take into account the operational scenarios, environments and circumstances in which the weapon is intended to be employed, and during development they must ensure that the algorithms and technical capabilities of the weapon make it suitable for use in these circumstances. This applies also to the legal aspect. Thus, it should be ensured that, under the circumstances in which the weapon is intended to be used, and in the way it would be authorized to be used, its future employment would comply with the Laws of Armed Conflict. As any other weapon, LAWS could be authorized for use only subject to limitations and conditions, including with regard to permitted operational environments or circumstances. For example, LAWS with limited technical capabilities may be approved for use only in relatively simple environments.

The second stage is the operational planning and deployment of the LAWS. In this stage, it will be a human who plans the mission. It will be a human who decides if, where and how to deploy and activate a certain weapon system, in accordance with the capabilities and limitations of the system, its intended uses and its permitted conditions of use. The military commander who makes the decision to use the weapon is responsible that the use would comply with the Laws of Armed Conflict. If deemed necessary in order to meet the legal requirements, the commander should limit the system's operation by, for example, restricting the system's operation to a specific perimeter or during a limited timeframe. Subsequently, the manner in which the weapon is deployed and operated directly derives from all of the prior phases just discussed. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the humans involved that the system's use will be lawful.



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Therefore, with regard to LAWS it would be incorrect to claim there will be no human judgment, involvement or control involved, or that a weapon itself makes a decision regarding life and death. Human input will be embedded into the weapon itself and into its deployment. To claim that there may be cases of using LAWS without any human input would be akin to arguing, for example, that a booby-trap that exploded did so on its own and made decisions regarding life and death, without any humans involved.

Finally, Mr. Chair, Israel is of the view that this comprehensive picture of human input could be best summed up in the requirement that there must be appropriate levels of human judgment over weapon systems, including LAWS.

I Thank you.