

Statement by Amnesty International at the CCW Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS), 29 August 2018 (as delivered)

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Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

Amnesty International, a member of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, would like to thank you for your leadership in guiding the GGE discussions and is grateful for the opportunity to contribute its views on the pathways forward.

As Amnesty International has previously highlighted, we foresee that the development and use of autonomous weapons systems without effective and meaningful human control over critical functions would result in unlawful killings and injuries, violating international human rights law, as well as international humanitarian law. We therefore believe that any pathway forward must address the multiple risks related to adherence to both bodies of law.

While some measures that have been proposed to address the issue of lethal autonomous weapons systems signal a commitment to move towards a concrete outcome, we believe that policy proposals, such as political declarations or codes of conduct, would not adequately address the multiple and significant legal, ethical, operational and security challenges posed by autonomous weapons systems. In Amnesty International's view, a far more ambitious mandate is needed to respond to the grave threat posed by such weapons systems with the urgency that this issue demands.

We note that a significant number of States have expressed a desire to move towards a negotiating mandate leading to the establishment of a legally-binding instrument to prohibit the development, production, transfer and use of autonomous weapons systems.

In Amnesty International's view, there is a sufficient basis of agreement among States Parties to the CCW on various issues to move to negotiate a legally binding instrument. As several States have already highlighted, there is broad agreement that (i) all weapons must comply with international law, including those with autonomous functions, (ii) there is a need to retain human control over the use of force to ensure adherence to international law; and (iii) the CCW is the appropriate forum for discussing the challenges posed by lethal autonomous weapons systems.

In this light, Amnesty International calls on States to commit to begin negotiations on a legally-binding instrument to prohibit the development, production, transfer and use of autonomous weapons systems, as the most effective way to ensure that meaningful and effective human control is retained over the critical functions of target selection and engagement, and to ensure compliance with international law.

I thank you for your attention.