



DELEGATION OF JAPAN TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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Statement by H.E. Ambassador Toshio SANO
Permanent Representative of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament
Experts Meeting on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems to
The Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons
Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects

13 May 2014, Geneva

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, let me express my appreciation to you for the thorough and comprehensive preparation of this meeting. Thanks to your well advanced planning, we are pleased to see so many experts from various parts of the world, from states and civil society, gathered here for this meeting. I would also like to congratulate all the chairs under the thematic topics and welcome the kick-off speakers. We believe that such a variety of participants and panelists as well as your experienced diplomatic skill are of great value, and that they will guide our work forward. I would like to assure you of my Delegation's full support and cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to make some general remarks on a couple of key issues related to LAWS, which my Government has special interests. My Delegation will make more detailed and substantive interventions later under each thematic discussion.

Firstly, we highly appreciate the role of civil society for increasing the awareness of the humanitarian concerns regarding the progressive development of autonomous technology which could make LAWS a reality at some point in the future. Therefore, we support the call from civil society for the need to consider the issues related to LAWS which, in our view, require an in-depth and holistic approach from various perspectives including technical, legal, ethical and military aspects. Japan is willing to engage in such discussions in a constructive manner.

Secondly, as we deal with the emerging technology of LAWS, we are facing a challenge of defining LAWS. Although an agreement on the definition at this informal meeting is not likely, we believe it is imperative to develop a common understanding about what we perceive as LAWS in order to advance discussions.

In this regard, I would like to point out that if we consider LAWS as “fully” lethal autonomous weapon systems, which once activated, can effectively select and engage a target without human intervention, we believe, at this stage, it is questionable such autonomous weapons could comply with international humanitarian law, and therefore, should be highlighted in our discussion. Also, while we may continue researching and developing non-lethal autonomous technology for defense purposes, we are not convinced of the need to develop “fully” lethal autonomous weapon systems which is completely out of control of human intervention.

Thirdly, I would like to emphasize the need to recognize the significance of the peaceful use of autonomous technology in the civilian field. We believe that such technology is not only useful, but also contributes to a safe and sound life for us all. Specifically, we are convinced that the advantages autonomous technology provides in the civil field, such as health care, welfare, agriculture, and rescue operations cannot be overstated.

Allow me to provide an example. In the aftermath of the unprecedented earthquake on the 11th of March 2011 and the following disaster of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Japan, we employed a variety of robots with the support of some states having advanced technology for search, rescue and surveillance operations. These robots were able to enter areas where human beings could not due to the risk of buildings collapsing or being exposed to radiation, and were able to successfully remove rubble and debris and perform search operations. This incident convinced us to reinforce our efforts in researching and developing robotics technology, particularly for rescue purposes.

Therefore, it is our strong belief that our discussion in this informal meeting should pay due recognition to the importance of our efforts in advancing autonomous technology in the civilian field.

Mr. Chairman,

I will stop here and allow our experts to speak in more detail when each topic is considered. We look forward to the discussions throughout this week.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.