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Group of Governmental Experts  
on lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS) 2018,  
Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

**Exchange of General Views**

Geneva, 9<sup>th</sup> of April 2018

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Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the Conference on Disarmament

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Mr. Chair,

We are pleased to see you again chairing this Group of Governmental Experts (GGE). Let me assure you of the full support of my delegation.

Under your able leadership, we addressed the issue of (L)AWS in a formal setting for the first time in 2017. Discussions were constructive and focused. Despite difficult conditions, in particular because time available was cut in half due to outstanding financial contributions, the GGE was able to adopt conclusions and recommendations containing a number of shared views, and to pave the way for the continuation of its work.

The GGE notably confirmed that **International Humanitarian Law (IHL) applies** to Autonomous Weapons (AWS), that States **remain responsible** for the development and use of AWS, and that they must **ensure accountability for the use of AWS as for any other weapon system** [...] in accordance with applicable international law, in particular international humanitarian law. The reaffirmation by High Contracting Parties of the validity of IHL and the obligation to ensure accountability – albeit self-evident from our national perspective – represents a **key element on**

**which to base** further work. Switzerland has long suggested **putting compliance with international law at the center of the CCW's AWS debate**, and to **identify appropriate measures with a view to securing and facilitating IHL compliance**.

Last year's GGE also agreed to focus the next stage of our work on the **characterization of AWS**, to further assess the aspects of **human-machine interaction**, and to keep potential **military applications** under review. Focusing on such key topics is essential in order to take our efforts forward.

We are confident that the programme of work that you have elaborated will enable the group to address these elements and to make significant progress in 2018. My delegation is looking forward to the discussions under the respective agenda items later in the week. In this regard, we are also looking forward to the various **contributions from civil society and academia**, including to the planned side events, which complement the GGE's working sessions.

Mr. Chair,

While we welcome the results of last year's GGE and this year's continuation of the GGE's work, it is clear that **views in the room differ** on a range of issues. We do hope that our discussions will contribute to the development of **a shared understanding of the challenges posed by AWS** and of the possible responses by **the CCW in addressing these challenges**.

As we stated last year, we are of the view that the CCW should work towards concrete outcomes – working papers by our own delegation as well as by others contain a number of pertinent ideas. While we are flexible regarding the shape and form of such outcomes, we continue to believe that **a political declaration by the CCW** could be a pragmatic and achievable next step. A political declaration would constitute the end an initial achievement. It should enable us to validate key understandings, affirm a number of principles and provide guidance on the way forward.

#### **Key elements of such a declaration could include**

- a **working definition** for AWS that clarifies what systems should be covered by the discussions;
- a shared **understanding of what autonomy means in the targeting cycle**;

- a commitment by High Contracting Parties that they will retain the necessary level and degree of human implication to guarantee that AWS respect IHL and other applicable law at all times, recognizing that this control can be exerted in the development and/or employment phase of these weapons;
- a reaffirmation by High Contracting Parties of their commitment to fully implement and comply with international law, in particular IHL;
- In view of ensuring compliance, a **reaffirmation of the obligation to review new weapons** and to determine whether their employment would, in some or all circumstances, contravene existing international law;
- Still with a view to ensuring compliance, **work towards best practices, technical standards and policy measures**. For example, with regard to legal reviews [of new weapons], it could be of interest to identify standard methods and protocols for testing autonomous weapon systems that take into account their unique characteristics.

This list is obviously not exhaustive. Such a political declaration can hardly be negotiated overnight and would require extensive work, but the very process of working in a practical direction could give our work the necessary focus and serve as a platform for concrete work.

I thank you for your attention.