



Kingdom of the Netherlands

STATEMENT BY

**H.E. Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast
Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
to the Conference on Disarmament and
Disarmament Ambassador at large**

CCW Informal Meeting of Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS)

13-17 April 2015, Geneva

General Debate

Mr. Chairman,

Let me first congratulate you on the organization and preparation of this meeting on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems or LAWS. You can count on the full support of my delegation in making this meeting successful.

In the Netherlands, we have a discussion on LAWS with involvement of the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense, relevant partners of civil society, and academia, in order to gain a better knowledge of the developments in this field and related problems. There have been discussions with Parliament on this issue and we are extending our knowledge and understanding.

The Netherlands has no plans for the development of completely automatic systems. On the question of legality of weapon systems we are guided by international law and in particular by International Humanitarian Law. All weapon systems (and their eventual use in armed conflicts) should meet the rules and regulations of international law. Part of that is Art. 36 of the 1st Protocol to the Geneva Conventions. My colleagues from the Ministry of Defense will make a contribution to the debate on Art. 36 through a presentation by Major Antzoulatos-Borgstein.

We see the notion of meaningful human control as an important concept for the discussion on LAWS. Command responsibility is an issue here. Although it seems somewhat early for regulation, we can and should look into the need. In our opinion, regulation should be effective, proportional and we should be able to implement it in a verifiable way. The dual use nature of Artificial Intelligence technologies is playing a role here.

Together with Switzerland, the Netherlands have started a project of expert discussions with UNIDIR. We just agreed to a second part of this project. The results of the UNIDIR project are on your desk. We think it is a substantial contribution to deepen the international dialogue and to make progress possible. From a national approach, the Ministry funds a PhD on the development and use of Autonomous Weapons Systems for targeting purposes, with a particular focus on the human role. The PhD student, Merel Ekelhof, is part of our delegation and participates in the debate here.

Mr. Chairman,

The CCW is the right forum to move forward. We thank you for the food-for-thought paper which can help us in our discussions. Like last year, we would also like to acknowledge the crucial and important role that the NGO community has played in raising the challenges with regard to LAWS to the international community. Never before has a disarmament-related issue gained the interest so quickly. When the issue was first raised we were able to adopt a mandate to further explore this topic in the CCW context. This rapid development both shows the importance of the role of the NGO community in disarmament matters as well as the urgency the international community attaches to debating LAWS.

On the way forward we think it is important to find common ground for definitions. Another important element is the exchange of best practices, in particular concerning Art. 36, Art. 36 Commissions and the development of policies in addressing this issue. The mandate is there, there is a lot of information and there is common ground to move forward.

For us it is important to have a result oriented discussion this week. We will actively contribute to that.

Thank you.