

**Informal Meeting of Experts on
Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS)
(Geneva, 11-15 April 2016)**

Statement by Ambassador Tehmina Janjua, PR of Pakistan

General Exchange of Views

Mr. Chairman,

We thank you for all your efforts for the preparation of this meeting, especially for the annotated agenda and the food for thought non-paper. It would allow a substantive exchange of views and a thorough examination of all issues pertaining to Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, or LAWS. You have my delegation's full support.

Building on the previous Informal Meetings of Experts held in May 2014 and April 2015, and this meeting, we look forward to the formulation of concrete recommendations on the issue of LAWS for the forthcoming CCW Review Conference.

Pakistan participated actively in the previous two Informal Meetings of Experts and also contributed a paper last year summarizing our general views on the subject.

LAWS, are rightly described as the next revolution in military affairs, at par with the introduction of gun powder and nuclear weapons. In the absence of any human intervention, such weapons in fact fundamentally change the nature of war.

LAWS are by nature unethical, because there is no longer a human in the loop and the power to make life and death decisions are delegated to machines which inherently lack compassion and intuition. This will make war more inhumane. Regardless of the level of sophistication and programming, machines cannot replace humans in making the vital decision of taking another human's life.

LAWS cannot be programmed to comply with International Humanitarian Law (IHL), in particular its cardinal rules of distinction, proportionality, and precaution. These rules can be complex and entail subjective decision making requiring human judgment. The introduction of fully autonomous weapons in the battlefield would be a major leap backward on account of their profound implications on norms and behaviour that the world has painstakingly arrived at after centuries of

warfare. We firmly believe that developments in future military technologies should follow the established law and not vice versa.

LAWS will lower the threshold of going to war resulting in armed conflict no longer being a measure of last resort. Consequently, the resort to use of force may become a more frequent phenomenon. LAWS would, therefore, undermine international peace and security. Their introduction would affect progress on disarmament and non-proliferation. Faced with the prospect of being overwhelmed by LAWS, states possessing WMD capabilities would be reluctant to give them up, while others would feel encouraged to acquire them.

LAWS create an accountability vacuum and provide impunity to the user due to the inability to attribute responsibility for the harm that they cause. If the nature of a weapon renders responsibility for its consequences impossible, its use should be considered unethical and unlawful.

LAWS could easily be used in anonymous and clandestine operations as well as for targeted killing including in the territory of other states as is being witnessed in the use of armed drones. The breaches of State sovereignty – in addition to breaches of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law – associated with targeted killing programmes risk making the world and the protection of life less secure with LAWS in the equation.

The use of LAWS in the battlefield would amount to a situation of one-sided killing. Besides depriving the combatants of the targeted state the protection offered to them by the international law of armed conflict, LAWS would also risk the lives of civilians and non-combatants. The unavailability of a legitimate human target of the LAWS user State on the ground could lead to reprisals on its civilians including through terrorist acts.

The states that are currently developing and using LAWS cannot afford to be complacent that such capabilities will not proliferate over time, and hence they too shall become vulnerable. Going by past experience we all know that monopolies over such technologies do not last forever. Since the developing countries are not going to carry the burden of non-proliferation, an unchecked robotic arms race could ensue. Besides, LAWS could also proliferate to non-state actors with unimaginable consequences.

Like any other complex machine, LAWS can never be fully predictable or reliable. They could fail for a wide variety of reasons including human error, malfunctions, degraded communications, software failures, cyber attacks, jamming and spoofing, etc. There will always be a level of

uncertainty about the way an autonomous weapon system will interact with the external environment.

Based on these considerations, the introduction of LAWS would be illegal, unethical, inhumane and unaccountable as well as destabilizing for international peace and security with grave consequences. Therefore, their further development and use must ideally be pre-emptively banned through a dedicated Protocol of the CCW. Pending the negotiations and conclusions of a legally binding Protocol, the states currently developing such weapons should place an immediate moratorium on their production and use.

Mr. Chairman,

Although the concept of “meaningful human control” has gained some currency and traction in the context of LAWS, we are of the view that the concept of “meaningful human control” only provides an *approach* to discussing the weaponization of increasingly autonomous technologies; it does not provide a *solution* to the technical, legal, moral and regulatory questions that they pose.

Mr. Chairman,

Going through the third round of informal meetings of experts, my delegation stands ready to move the debate on LAWS to the next level. We look forward to further serious consideration of this issue in the CCW framework and are ready to join efforts towards this end in a dedicated Group of Governmental Experts (GGE).

Main Committee-II of the Fifth CCW Review Conference, being held in December this year, should take up the issue of Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems and address the matter substantively for charting a concrete way forward on this important issue without any preconditions.

These were the general remarks of my delegation. We will be making further contributions during the course of this meeting.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.