



European Union

EU Statement

Group of Governmental Experts

Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems

Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

Geneva, 25-29 March 2019

- An exploration of the potential challenges posed by emerging technologies in the area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems to International Humanitarian Law

Mr. Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The Candidate Countries North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, as well as Georgia align themselves with this statement.

The EU welcomes the progress made during the 2018 meetings of the open-ended Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (GGE LAWS), notably the agreement on the ten Possible Guiding Principles which reaffirm that international law, in particular International Humanitarian Law (IHL), fully applies to existing and emerging weapons systems and that States remain responsible and accountable for their development, deployment and use in situations of armed conflict.

The Guiding Principles provide a good basis to strive for further progress in 2019. We are of the view that the programme of work provides ample opportunity to build upon the Principles and develop our understanding on how to implement and operationalise them. Such an approach would further substantiate our work on LAWS with the aim to ensuring that any

* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

weapon system is developed, deployed and used in compliance with international law, in particular IHL.

International law, in particular IHL and International Human Rights Law, remain central to our efforts in this GGE, but other legal frameworks such as International Criminal Law may be relevant.

We emphasise that States have a responsibility to ensure that the development, deployment and use of emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems comply with international law. We recall that national legal weapons reviews must be conducted, pursuant to Article 36 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, in the study, development, acquisition or adoption of a new weapon, means or method of warfare, in order to determine whether its employment would, in some or all circumstances, be prohibited by applicable international law. We encourage all States to conduct legal weapons reviews, and share information and best practices on how Article 36 is implemented with regard to emerging technologies in the area of LAWS. This would contribute to transparency and confidence-building between States and help States to respond to challenges posed by emerging technologies in weapons systems.

When it comes to the issue of LAWS, technological innovation, including advancements in Artificial Intelligence, is likely to have an impact on the future battlefield. This underscores the importance of processes and structures to ensure that any weapon system is developed, deployed and used in compliance with IHL as well as not putting security at risk. The new technologies have given rise to a broad debate in our societies as to the ethical and legal questions that arise from the development and use of LAWS. In line with the 2018 report by the GGE LAWS, relevant ethical perspectives of emerging technologies in the area of LAWS is an issue which is being considered by our policy makers and should remain a relevant aspect in our deliberations.

At EU level, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, with the support of the European Commission, is continuing her consultations with the UN, with the Global Tech Panel that she has set up, and with other multilateral actors to help find solutions to these complex security challenges.

Thank you, Mr. Chair