



**Statement by H. E. Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič  
Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and  
other International Organizations at the  
Informal Expert Meeting on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (CCW)**

**Geneva, 11 April 2016**

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Mr. Chairman,

The Holy See Delegation would like to express its satisfaction for the excellent preparatory work that you, Mr. Chairman, have undertaken to give every chance of success to our meeting.

The issue of lethal autonomous weapon systems is on our agenda for the third consecutive year. The Holy See had the opportunity to express its views on this important issue on previous occasions.

To respond positively to your request, Mr. Chairman, that encourages delegations to express their positions in preparation for a possible decision in the context of the CCW Review Conference in December, the Mission of the Holy See would like to briefly present a working paper in which we put forward a few arguments in favor of a collective action which seeks to prohibit the development and use of lethal autonomous weapon system.

A prevention policy seems to be the best approach. The historical experience of regulations, prohibitions or control of certain weapons shows that most often they took place after grave human tragedies. Nuclear weapons, chemical weapons, cluster munitions or antipersonnel landmines are a few good examples. The human costs are exorbitant when responses come late. Prevention is the only way to break the vicious circle of the race between technological progress of military means and their destructive force and attempts to better defend international humanitarian law.

The risks of lethal autonomous weapons systems are too numerous and important to be ignored. Besides the fact that it leaves to a machine the decision of life or death of a human being, one of the dangers is that these weapons could lead to strategies diluting or concealing true responsibilities, inducing a total lack of accountability. Instead of contributing to the defense of peace, they are turning into a progressive incitement to war.

If we want peace, we must not only avoid accumulation of arms, but we must also convert minds. Peace must be born of mutual trust between nations, instead of being imposed on nations by the terror of weapons. This confidence is based on an "ethics of brotherhood" between nations. But the accumulation of lethal autonomous weapons could undermine that trust.

We must be concerned about the use of these kinds of advanced weapons. It is clear that investing on sophisticated weapons fails to restore peace. Quite the contrary! It appears that these weapons do not protect us against attacks and terrorism of all kinds perpetrated by people using rudimentary methods, but ready to sacrifice their lives. The balance of nuclear terror has shown its limits, and with the research and development on lethal autonomous weapons, we are still in a logic that bears no fruit. We must face the facts, Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems are not able to fight against the current scourge of terrorism and asymmetric wars. The real fight is the one which will restore justice, respect for human rights, respect for minorities' rights, political participation and integral development. This fight will not be won with technologically powerful weapons. The use of LAWS will only lead to false security and to instability. In any case, it will not establish the conditions for peace.

For all the reasons mentioned, we must be cautious about the research and development of LAWS. Now is the time to prevent LAWS from becoming the reality of tomorrow's warfare. The CCW should make a courageous decision of prohibiting lethal autonomous weapons like it did in the past concerning other types of weapons.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.