Second Session of the CCW Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, 27-31 August 2018

Agenda item 6(a): Characterization of the systems under consideration in order to promote a common understanding on concepts and characteristics relevant to the objectives and purposes of the Convention (27 August 2018)

Statement by Ambassador Farukh Amil
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Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to begin by reiterating our appreciation for the manner in which you have chaired this GGE. You can rest assured of my delegation's continued support and cooperation. We thank you for the informal consultations undertaken in preparation for this meeting.

We also thank the ICRC and civil society representatives present in the room for their engagement. The advocacy by the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots has been most significant and beneficial to the process. We have benefitted from their contributions and encourage them to continue this work despite the frustratingly slow pace of progress.

We hope that the GGE, in keeping with the agreed mandate, would produce concrete policy recommendations outlining "possible options for addressing the humanitarian and international security challenges posed by emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems".

LAWS are rightly being described as the next revolution in military affairs. These weapons would fundamentally change the nature and the threshold for war, undermining international peace, security and stability, and affecting progress on disarmament. 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.

Autonomous machines cannot be programmed to comply with the rules of International Law and hence raise serious humanitarian and ethical concerns, in addition to security-related concerns. The further development and use of LAWS must ideally be pre-emptively banned through a dedicated Protocol of the CCW. Pending the negotiation and conclusion of a legally binding Protocol, the states currently developing such weapons should place a moratorium on their production.

Mr. Chairperson,

Since this afternoon's session is focussed on the issue of "characterisation", let me share a few remarks summarizing our views on this topic.

It is now widely recognized that LAWS are unique and novel weapons systems that have given rise to multi-faceted concerns, which need to be addressed multilaterally. National regulations and responses are not adequate.

Human control on the use of weapons with autonomous functions has been deemed essential. We now need to ascertain the scope and extent of human control that would satisfy all concerns.

Mr. Chairperson,

The discourse on characterisation should not become an avenue for complicating the debate, nor for procrastinating while the relevant technologies continue to be weaponised.

We must identify the key attributes that would characterise a given weapon system as LAWS. This should be a technical and policy-neutral process, and not a political issue. Characterisation of LAWS should be pursued as a matter of priority without prejudice to the regulatory response.

For my delegation, the most important factor in characterising a weapon system as LAWS is the level of its autonomy. Weapons that can autonomously select and engage a target, also known as a weapon's critical functions, without the direct involvement, control or supervision of a human, should be characterised as LAWS.

The idea is to capture all weapons systems that have the *capability* to act autonomously, regardless of whether their users have the *intention* to employ them in an autonomous mode. For instance, autonomous weapons systems with manual over-ride or self destruct and self-deactivate functions should not escape their characterisation as LAWS.

At this stage we need to demystify and simplify the debate. We should try to reach on a simple, common working understanding of LAWS, without necessarily agreeing on a comprehensive and all encompassing legal-technical definition that might be incorporated in a legal instrument in the future. This should indeed be among the priorities going forward with this process.

Mr. Chairperson,

Whilst weapon systems with Artificial Intelligence and increasingly autonomous functions are fast becoming a reality, we have not been able to resolve the host of legal, ethical and security concerns associated with them. We need to shift gears now and move towards the development of concrete policy recommendations, which should be the prime focus of the GGE during this session. My delegation will engage actively and constructively with that process.

I thank you, Mr. Chairperson.