

For interpreters

General statement (by Sweden at the 2015 CCW Meeting of Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS))

Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by congratulating you on your appointment as Chair of our Meeting and by pledging our full cooperation and support. Sweden very much appreciates your thorough consultations in preparation of this meeting.

Mr. Chairman,

Sweden believes in an approach to disarmament and international security that puts human beings in the centre of policy. The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) is a good example and expression of such an approach. We believe that the CCW is also an effective means to respond in a flexible way to future developments in the field of weapons technology, in particular as it represents an essential part of International Humanitarian Law which contributes to both preventing and reducing the suffering of civilians and combatants. In this respect we welcome this opportunity to continue our discussions on lethal autonomous weapon systems, LAWS, in the CCW.

Mr. Chairman,

As a starting point, we have stated before our belief that humans should not delegate to machines the power to make life-and-death decisions. As States we have an obligation to assess the legality of new weapons, and we have therefore welcomed also a continued discussion of this issue within the framework of CCW. Our Foreign Minister underlined these points as one of the priorities in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation in the yearly Statement of Government Policy in the Parliamentary Debate on Foreign Affairs that was held recently.

We are still lacking a clear definition of the term LAWS. There has been a tendency in this discussion to focus on technical issues, such as the dual-use nature of the technology involved and its application in both civilian and military systems. As some parties have suggested, it may be more fruitful to focus on identifying the critical functions of concern, with due consideration for the context in which a particular weapons system would be operating, as well as its effects, and take the discussion on definitions further from there.

An important consideration for the design and operation of systems with autonomous capability is the level of human control in the system. It follows from our starting point of not delegating power of life and death to machines that Sweden would support the principle of applying Meaningful Human Control which has already been put forward by

many parties. The necessary level of human control would depend on the particular situation and the requirements of international law in each case. This is an area that we expect to be explored further and we would be happy to do so in cooperation with others.

An important question that we will come to at the end of our present meeting is how to move forward beyond this discussion. Sweden is open to any way forward that can be agreed upon. Exploring ways and means of regulating LAWS may at some point become desirable. As a step forward, at this stage, we would encourage transparency and propose information-sharing measures among interested states. We hope that the meeting might arrive at some common understanding on information-sharing, and that the 2015 Meeting of State parties of the CCW could take a decision in that direction. Sweden would be happy to work with other interested States to move forward on transparency.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.