

**Statement by Ambassador D.B. Venkatesh Varma,**  
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**At the CCW Informal Meeting of Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons**  
**Geneva 17 April 2015**

Mr Chairman,

Since this is the first time we are addressing the plenary, we would like to congratulate you on your chairing of this meeting. The active discussions held this week are in no small measure due to your efforts in promoting an interaction between State Parties, experts and NGOs active in this field.

2. India has stressed the continued relevance of the CCW in addressing challenges posed by the development and use of new weapons and their systems with respect to international law in particular international humanitarian law. As such, we have supported discussions on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS) held in 2014 and their continuation on the basis of the agreed mandate in 2015.
3. In our view, a discussion on LAWS should include questions on their compatibility with international law including international humanitarian law as well the impact of their possible dissemination on international security. Our aim should be to strengthen the CCW in terms of its objectives and purposes through increased systemic controls on international armed conflict in a manner that does not widen the technology gap amongst states or encourage the increased resort to military force in the expectation of lesser casualties or that use of lethal force can be shielded from the dictates of public conscience.
4. The panel discussions this week offered an opportunity to explore in depth various dimensions of LAWS – legal, technical, and ethical issues and possible impact on international security. However, it is not clear whether we have moved closer to a common understanding of LAWS in terms of all the elements of our mandate- to look at LAWS as an emerging technology in the context of the objectives and purposes of the Convention.
5. In our view, there continue to be wide divergences on issues such as “meaningful human control”. It is also not clear whether distinctions can be drawn between oversight, review, control or judgement or how they would apply to a new weapon system from the time

of its conception, design and development to production, deployment and use or for that matter when does a weapon system cross the line to become a new weapon or its use constitute a new method of warfare. These are complex questions with no easy answers. In these circumstances, it may be prudent not to jump to definitive conclusions. At the same time, we cannot ignore the inexorable march of technology, in particular of dual use nature, expanding the autonomous dimension of lethal weapon systems, while keeping in mind the CCW remains a relevant and acceptable framework for addressing such issues of concern to the international community. Hence, there may be merit in continued consideration of LAWS on the basis of an agreed mandate to be adopted by the Meeting of States Parties in November this year.