

**1st Session of the Group of Governmental Experts
on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, 2023
General Statement
6th March 2023**

Mr. Chair,

Our delegation commends your leadership in steering our work in the Group of Governmental Experts and assure you of our continued support as we endeavor to advance our work in the GGE.

As a country that has consistently advocated for the importance of centrality of human control in weapons system and the legal, ethical, military as well as security concerns related to autonomous weapon systems we are encouraged by the recent developments and the growing momentum on the call for regulation in autonomous weapon systems. We consider the joint statement delivered at the UNGA last year supported by 70 states on this subject as well as the Communiqué issued at the Latin American and the Caribbean Conference of Social and Humanitarian Impact of Autonomous Weapons more recently calling for “the urgent negotiation of an international legally binding instrument on autonomy in weapons systems” as important steps forward in this regard. We emphasize on the importance of building on these progressive developments to ensure meaningful human control in weapon systems through the development of an international legally binding instrument.

Mr. Chair,

We thank the delegations that have produced substantive proposals as per the mandate of the GGE on the consideration of proposals on possible measures related to the normative and operational framework on LAWS. While we agree with the suggestion that we need to find points of convergences in various proposals before us we highlight the importance of being guided by the humanitarian, legal, ethical and security risks that have been repeatedly highlighted in this forum in this exercise. My delegation retains its position that non-binding regulations in this regard are inadequate given the serious consequences of the use of LAWS without clear legal prohibitions and regulations. Commitments by states at the national level on responsible use of AI in weapon systems through non-binding frameworks may provide useful confidence building measures but they are not an adequate response to the serious legal, ethical and security implications of the use of these weapon systems. While we agree with the argument that weapons systems that are inherently unpredictable and cannot be used in accordance with the IHL are de facto prohibited, a new international treaty stipulating the prohibitions and regulations on positive obligations is necessary for legal clarity, certainty and compliance. If the argument on the adequacy of existing IHL principles on emerging technologies in weapon systems is accepted we wouldn't have had the need to adopt a new protocol on blinding laser weapons.

We thank the delegations that have produced substantive proposals as per the mandate of the GGE on the consideration of proposals on possible measures related to the normative and operational framework on LAWS. While we agree with the suggestion that we need to find points of convergences in various proposals before us, we are deeply concerned about the moral and legal acceptability of letting a robotic system to unleash destructive force in warfare and take attendant life-or-death decisions without any human intervention as have been repeatedly highlighted in this forum. My delegation reiterates its principled position that non-binding regulations in this regard are inadequate given the serious consequences of the use of LAWS without clear legal prohibitions and regulations. Commitments by states at the national level on responsible use of AI in weapon systems through non-binding frameworks may provide useful confidence building measures but they are not an adequate response to the serious legal, ethical and security implications of the use of these weapon systems. While we agree with the argument that weapons systems that are inherently unpredictable and cannot be used in accordance with the IHL are de facto prohibited, a new international treaty stipulating the prohibitions and regulations on positive obligations is necessary for legal clarity, certainty and compliance. If the argument on the adequacy of existing IHL principles on emerging

Mr. Chair, we note that the concerns related to international security have not been adequately addressed in our discussions in the GGE even though such concerns form a central issue in this debate. The application of autonomy in weapon systems where decisions on human life are left to be taken by algorithms in weapon systems would make fundamental changes in warfare and would have significant international security implications. Development of sophisticated autonomous weapon systems might reduce military casualties, yet at the same time such weapon capabilities would lower the threshold for the use of force, reduce the motivation to find negotiated settlements to conflicts, increase international arms race and the proliferation of conflicts. We note in this regard the preamble of the CCW which provides that “the right of belligerents to adopt means of injuring the enemy is not unlimited”, the desire of the High Contracting Parties to “end the arms race” as well as the recognition of the importance of “pursuing every effort which may contribute to progress towards general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control”.

Development of sophisticated lethal autonomous weapon systems will lead to acquisition of competitive military capabilities which might reduce military casualties, and improve strategic capabilities, yet at the same time such weapon capabilities would lower the threshold for the use of force, discourage warring parties for negotiated settlements to conflicts, sparks new international arms race and the proliferation of conflicts. We note in this regard the preamble of the CCW which provides that “the right of belligerents to adopt means of injuring the enemy is not unlimited”, the desire of the High Contracting Parties to “end the arms race” as well as the recognition of the importance of “pursuing every effort which may contribute to progress towards general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control”.

Mr. Chair, we have been discussing this important issue for nearly nine years in this forum and a growing majority of states have been calling for the urgent need to adopt binding regulations to govern LAWS. Even though we note a considerable advancement of understandings of the characteristics of these weapon systems, the associated risks and the types of prohibitions and regulations, we have been unable to adopt a substantive outcome report from our deliberations.

We express hope that the growing international momentum on this issue is sustained and that the GGE is able to adopt a substantive outcome document this year which corresponds to the seriousness as well as the urgency of this issue.