



**General Comments by Sri Lanka on the Revised Drafts Elements paper of the Chair at
the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems
27 September 2021**

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

We thank you and your team for the revised elements paper and look forward for more focused and constructive discussion on the revised paper.

At the outset, we note a number of substantive changes to the initial elements paper shared by the Chair in the previous GGE session, which many delegations including Sri Lanka considered as a step forward in our deliberations, providing a solid basis for the Group to agree on forward looking recommendations for the Review Conference later this year. The current revised version of the paper however, in certain important sections is a setback in our view. The approach of the revised paper in some sections appears to provide the notion that development and use of LAWS is acceptable as long as such development and use are done following certain guidelines and practices.

A large majority of delegations participating in the GGE discussions over the years have pointed out the possible alarming humanitarian and ethical consequences of the development and use of weapon systems that cannot be controlled by human beings. The danger of unpredictability and the unreliability of weapon systems operating outside the human control cannot be over emphasized. The advantage of such weapon systems cannot by any means outweigh the significant challenges they pose to stability and safety of humanity.

However, in para 5 we note that the of use of autonomous technology used for intelligence gathering , surveillance, self-destruction, self –neutralization mechanisms have been considered in the context of autonomous weapons using lethal force, assisted by or operated by fully autonomous systems, as positive examples for consideration of lethal autonomous weapons to uphold compliance with IHL. The manner in which paragraph 5 is currently presented provides an inaccurate impression that LAWS in fact are a positive contribution to the implementation of the IH, in case of which our extensive discussions in this forum over the years on risks and challenges posed by these weapons systems to IHL and other legal frameworks become superfluous.

In our view the functionalities such as self-destruction, self-neutralization or self-deactivation do not provide a solution to the serious far reaching challenges to the fundamental IHL principles posed by weapon systems functioning with no human control.

Therefore, we request to avoid any imbalanced reflection vis a vis the risks and potential benefits of autonomous weapon systems.

We would also welcome a reference to the centrality of human control in this section which we believe is at the core of this debate.

Mr. Chair, we reiterate once more the urgency to agree on internationally agreed prohibitions and limitations for the development and use of LAWS, before it is too late.

Thank you.