



Interventions by Sri Lanka

Second session of the 2026 CCW Group of Governmental Experts on emerging technologies in the area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (GGE on LAWS), 31 August – 04 September, Geneva

31 August 2026, Morning Session

Thank you Mr. Chair

At the outset, Sri Lanka wishes to express its sincere gratitude to you, Mr. Chair, for your outstanding leadership, dedication, and guidance throughout the process of formulating this 'set of elements.'

Navigating these complex deliberations is not an easy task, and we deeply commend your poise, patience, integrity and diplomatic skills, as well as the tireless efforts in bringing us to this pivotal stage, today.

Sri Lanka believes that the 'Chair's rolling text' or the 'set of elements' contained in sub-section A of the current version of the draft final report provides a foundation to fulfill the mandate of the GGE on LAWS and thus serves as the basis to launch formal negotiations on a legally binding instrument on lethal autonomous weapon systems within the CCW framework.

Paragraph 25:

Mr Chair,

Allow me to move to para 25 of your additional suggestions.

Sri Lanka wishes to place on record, its support for Paragraph 25, which establishes an essential foundation for the entire set of elements and workable definition for lethal autonomous weapon systems which could be used as a baseline for future negotiations.

We oppose any revisions or modifications to para 25 that risk weakening its substance or reducing its operational scope.

Maintaining a robust characterization is essential to ensure effective prohibitions and restrictions to govern emerging autonomous weapon technologies.

Mr. Chair,

While Paragraph 25 establishes a workable characterization, characterization alone is not sufficient. We must ensure that this characterization directly links to clear prohibitions in subsequent elements.

We note that the characterization in para 25 serves as an overarching, neutral characterization for all lethal autonomous weapon systems regardless of what they target.

Therefore, the systems that operate autonomously against human targets, such as anti-personnel autonomous weapons which are designed to directly target humans must be subject to an explicit, unconditional ban in a subsequent paragraph of the text to prevent digital dehumanization.

My delegation believes that the text needs to be further strengthened through our deliberations at this session by addressing such kinds of remaining gaps in several critical elements.

Mr. Chair,

My delegation has carefully listened to the proposals made by other delegations regarding the text. We view the current draft as a result of compromise. We should determine not to water-down the report in a way that would undermine years of effort, contributions and constructive convergence.

Sri Lanka wishes to recall to this forum and welcome the renewed call by the UN Secretary General and the President of the ICRC to commence negotiation on a legally binding instrument establishing clear prohibitions and restrictions, before it is too late. For this purpose, the 'set of elements' before us constitutes an indispensable foundation and the single most viable pathway to initiate negotiations before technological developments outpace our deliberations.

It is my delegation's earnest hope that all delegations will strive toward our collective objective by further strengthening the 'set of elements' during this session.

Sri Lanka supports the full inclusion of the 'set of elements' in the final report of the GGE on LAWS.

Thank you

01 September 2026, Afternoon Session

Mr. Chair,

Para 35:

Sri Lanka maintains that Paragraph 35 must be firmly anchored in the foundational principles of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). While existing international legal frameworks were not designed for algorithmic warfare, current international law must be complemented by carefully

coded, specific and binding operational rules in the subsequent paragraphs as a package based on how autonomous systems operate in the contemporary battlefield.

Para 36:

Regarding Paragraph 36, my delegation strongly supports the centrality of 'human judgement and control' throughout the life-cycle of lethal autonomous weapon systems. We place deliberate emphasis on leading with 'human judgement,' as this legal obligation centers on the active cognitive reasoning of the human mind.

Key IHL obligations such as assessing proportionality, distinguishing combatants from civilians, identifying surrenders require cognitive subjective reasoning that machines simply cannot perform. Placing 'judgement' first ensures that 'control' is recognized as the mechanism to enforce moral and legal reasoning, rather than mere technical and administrative oversight.

Furthermore, under International Criminal Law, legal liability for war crimes attaches to human intent and knowledge (or *mens rea*). If control is reduced to a purely technical exercise, attributing individual responsibility to a commander for algorithmic failure becomes exceptionally difficult. Leading with 'human judgement' guarantees that the human decision-maker remains legally accountable for the use of force. Reversing this sequence risks reducing human agency to administrative system oversight, rather than active legal and ethical decision-making over the use of force. Therefore, we support going back to the original formulation, '**human judgement & control**'.

My delegation remains firmly of the view that introducing the term 'indirect' creates a critical legal loophole. It permits machines to execute attacks without active, real-time human supervision, thereby diluting human control into pre-mission programming or remote oversight.

The distinction between 'direct' and 'indirect' control remains dangerously vague, eroding the precise level of human control required to ensure IHL compliance. Consequently, Sri Lanka opposes normalizing the absence of effective control through the formulation 'directly or indirectly' in para 36. Allowing algorithms to operate autonomously without continuous oversight, directly undermines the core IHL principles of distinction and precaution in dynamic combat environments. However, we understand the practical aspects of exercising human control in real operations whether it's 'direct or indirect'. Therefore, we welcome the constructive proposals made by the delegations to bridge this gap and look forward to a common landing zone.

Para 38:

Additionally, real-time control is required to ensure the responsible chain of command as outlined in **para 38 (a)** and timely deactivation or neutralization capability as outlined in **Paragraph 38 (d)** to prevent legal responsibility gaps.

Para 37:

We oppose making human control entirely subjective as outlined in **para 37**. Militaries could easily invoke 'operational context' to lower 'control' thresholds in a dynamic conflict environment. Sri Lanka is of the view that core parameters of 'human control' must remain mandatory and inalienable baselines, rather than discretionary choices based on operational convenience.

Thank you.

03 September 2026, Afternoon Session

Mr. Chair,

We appreciate your efforts in presenting the revised version of the draft report. We see this text as a minimum standard to move to the next step. Even though it is not the perfect solution, it represents an optimal result of compromise and result of lengthy deliberations we had at the GGE on LAWS over the years. We also understand your rationale behind the revisions.

However, my delegation remains cautious regarding the deletion of the previous **paragraph 34**.

Additionally, it is difficult for my delegation to agree to the inclusion of the phrase "as feasible" in the **new paragraph 36**, as it could be read as a qualifier for considering factors to exercise human judgment. Conditioning 'control' on what is "feasible" under an "operational context" transforms an imperative legal duty into a discretionary operational preference. Therefore, we request you to revisit the language in paragraph 36, possibly by deleting the phrase "as feasible," which could otherwise risk legally validating unmonitored algorithmic execution as "unfeasible" in highly intensified military operations.

Mr. Chair, we bring these comments at this stage as we see human judgement and control are central to prohibiting and restricting LAWS in compliance with IHL principles.

Mr Chair,

My delegation is concerned about any further dilutions to the text and we reserve our comments on certain revisions in the spirit of compromise and joining consensus.

Chair, my delegation, deeply value your hard work and tireless efforts in the process.

Thank you.