

## **Kingdom of the Netherlands**

**2nd session of the GGE LAWS 2023, Palais de Nations,  
Geneva**

**Opening Statement, 15 May 2023**

**Delivered by H.E. Ambassador Robert in den Bosch  
Permanent Representative to the CD**

Thank you, Chair,

Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

First, let me express my delegation's sincere gratitude to our Chair and his team. You have managed to guide us through a constructive and productive first session in March and now have the challenging task to successfully conclude our work in 2023.

In addition to the statement by the European Union I would like to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

Chair, the debate in the GGE on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, and the broader topic of the use of AI in the military domain, are key priorities for the Netherlands.

On earlier occasions I already referred to the Summit on Responsible AI in the Military domain (REAIM) - held in the Hague in February of this year - and we are pleased that the Republic of Korea will organize a follow-up meeting.

REAIM has laid the foundations to continue our discussions on future norm development for the broader topic of AI in the military domain.

In the meantime, we look forward to a week of constructive discussions here in Geneva. We hope for a substantive outcome that will reflect the emerging consensus in this group on a number of important elements and that we will be able to bridge still existing differences.

Having a substantive outcome of this year's session of the GGE will be crucial to show the world that we are able to make a meaningful contribution to the process of establishing international rules and principles on the development and use of Autonomous Weapons Systems.

The Netherlands believes that progress in this discussion does matter, especially in the light of the current security situation. Furthermore, we also have to take into account the fast development of AI and other technologies and their impact on the capabilities of Autonomous Weapons Systems in the near future. For this reason we need to develop a set of measures to help us deal with the challenges and opportunities that these systems pose.

My delegation will therefore do all it can to support you in finding common ground and reaching a substantive outcome in this year's GGE LAWS Report.

We believe your draft report provides an excellent basis for discussion. Reaching consensus on the report is within reach if

we focus on the content of your proposals, look beyond the labels of terminology, and identify where our positions and ideas align.

I say that, because we see broad consensus emerging on a number of key concepts which therefore deserve explicit reference in your report.

The first is the concept of the two-tier-approach to Autonomous Weapons Systems: systems that cannot be used in accordance with international law, in particular international humanitarian law (IHL), due to their autonomous functions, should be explicitly prohibited. For weapons systems with autonomous functions that can be used in accordance with IHL, more clarity is needed through providing additional regulation.

There seems to be broad consensus that the main objective of this regulation should be to ensure that human judgement and control is maintained when such systems are developed and used. This element of human judgement and control also deserves an explicit reference.

Chair, the Netherlands supports a legally binding document concerning Autonomous Weapons Systems and we support your proposal that the GGE will continue its work and will develop a single set of measures to deal with the issue of emerging technologies in the area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems. We understand that perhaps not all High Contracting Parties to the CCW are yet ready for this step. On the other hand, we also know that there are numerous Parties

to the CCW that are in favour of pursuing a treaty regulating Autonomous Weapons Systems.

Chair, having said that, we should work from the position that all High Contracting Parties to the CCW share the objectives and purposes of the CCW. Collectively we have to address the challenges of autonomy in weapons systems, whilst the world is watching us. We call upon all delegations present in this room to go as far as you can, under the Chair's able leadership. And for the delegations that would wish to go even further than others, we hope you will come along for the ride for at least as far as the journey will take us this year.

Thank you, Chair for the opportunity to deliver some opening remarks and we look forward to sharing more detailed comments on your report in the coming days.