



**Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the
Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons**

Statement, Dr. John Borrie, New Zealand Delegation

15 May 2023

Thank you Mr Chair

My warmest greetings to your team, as well as other colleagues present. It's a pleasure to see you all here in Geneva.

The New Zealand delegation thanks you, Chair, for the draft report you have prepared, and for your continued efforts to move us along the path toward addressing the risks and challenges posed by autonomous weapons systems.

With this week representing the GGE's final session for 2023, there is a need for urgency in our deliberations. As others have mentioned this morning, the face of conflict is changing before our eyes. We as High Contracting Parties to the CCW need to respond in an effective manner. We need to demonstrate that we are up to the task of addressing new means and methods of warfare in a timely manner to ensure that international humanitarian law is properly respected and we respond to the dictates of public conscience.

Put bluntly, we want guard rails on autonomous weapons, and not just an ambulance at the bottom of the cliff after their widespread use and proliferation has occurred. To do this, it's our considered, national view that we need an appropriate mix of binding international prohibitions and regulation.

As others have mentioned, the GGE's been discussing this issue in some shape or form for about a decade. In 2019, we agreed eleven guiding principles in the CCW. Discussions and understandings since then have progressed beyond what's contained in those guiding principles, including as a result of the many interesting proposals circulated over the course of the last year. Although none of these proposals in themselves yet represents a comprehensive solution, in our view, they do indicate constructive engagement and some conceptual progress. Through the fog of our discussions, matters like what could be usefully prohibited and regulated are gradually becoming clearer through the emergence of the so-called two-tier approach – even if we don't all agree yet on the colour and the shape of what we are looking at yet.

Nevertheless, to anyone looking outside or looking through recent GGE reports, even that conceptual progress is not properly apparent. That's why it's incumbent upon us to deliver an agreed substantive outcome report this year that clearly signals a forward direction of

travel in our work, building on the very good GGE session we had in March, even as we recognise persistent differences of view.

Our hope is that this week will result in a further intensification of our efforts and achievement of a meaningful report that reflects principles of international humanitarian law and acknowledges relevant ethical perspectives, on the basis of the text you have put forward, Mr Chair.

We look forward this week to engaging constructively with all delegations to give effect to our mandate, and to agree a substantive outcome report. And we assure you, Chair, of our continued full support in this task.

Thank you.

Check against delivery