PHILIPPINES

U.N. Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW)
2023 Group of Government Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems
6-10 March 2023

STATEMENT
Agenda Item 5, Topic 1: Characterization of LAWS – definitions and scope

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Thank you, Mister Chair.

The issue of characterization and application is one of the few areas where consensus has yet to fully solidify, but it does not mean that there are no points of convergence.

There seems to be agreement among the proposals on broad points.

First, as we stated in the *Roadmap* we submitted with a group of states, an exact technical definition is not required to elaborate, develop, and negotiate a normative and operational framework. What we need as a starting point is a working characterization focusing on the human element.

Second, there is broad agreement – whether in writing or tangentially – that LAWS refers to weapon systems that incorporate autonomy into their critical functions of identification, selection, or engagement of a target. There is also board recognition that autonomy exists on a spectrum and that purely technical characteristics like physical performance, endurance, or sophistication in target acquisition and engagement may not alone be sufficient to characterize LAWS given evolution in technology.

The *Chinese Working Paper* builds on this understanding, positing that the purpose of autonomy is to reduce the dependence on human and external resources in military operations, to improve the adaptability to complex dynamic environment and survivability on the battlefields, and thus to better accomplish the battlefield missions assigned by human beings.

Third, the centrality of the human element is a strong point of convergence. This is a premise that draws on previous understandings reached during the past nine years of

GGE discussions. The original iteration of the U.S.-led proposal on *Principles and Good Practices* acknowledges this as well, asserting that considerations that should aid the identification and characteristics and concepts related to the identification of principles and good practices should recognize, among others, the necessity of a focus on the human element and its interface with machines.

The *Chinese Working Paper* identifies, among others, that the absence of human intervention and control during the process of executing a task, the impossibility for termination, and self-learning are among the elements of unacceptable LAWS. The *Dual-Track Paper* from European states also speaks of the need to prohibit LAWS that operate completely outside human control and responsible chain of command. Tangentially, these converge with the *Draft Protocol VI*'s attempt at characterization on the basis of meaningful human control.

We can build on these elements to develop a working characterization that will underpin prohibitions and regulations. Just as CCW Protocol IV provides a working characterization of blinding lasers based on their effects or features rather than technical specifications, we could build around a characterization that is flexible enough to accommodate relevant spectrums of autonomy and possible technological evolutions.

We find useful the new proposals this year that elaborates on these elements of convergences. The substantive elements enumerated in the *Draft Articles* presented yesterday by the U.S. and a group of states focuses on characteristics of autonomous weapon systems that inherently violate international humanitarian law. This is useful but it does not sufficiently reflect the converging view that the human element is central to any useful characterization of autonomous weapon systems. This premise is endorsed in the *Roadmap* as well as the *Working Paper* submitted last year by twenty-three states.

The *Palestinian Working Paper* provides a more exact definition of meaningful human control, which consists of the elements of predictability, reliability, understandability and explainability, and traceability. These are also reflected in the *Chinese Working Paper.* We are encouraged that the *Russian Working Paper* circulated yesterday provides useful elements of human control, including increased reliability and fault tolerance, limitations on types of targets, duration of operations, geographic scope and scale of use, timely intervention and deactivation, testing of weapon systems with AI technologies in a real operation environment. We find these to be helpful inputs that could also improve the *Draft Protocol VI* that we support.

There clearly remain many differences, but a working characterization that could cover all positions and be flexible enough to allow for good faith negotiations should not be elusive.

Thank you, Mister Chair.