

#### UK Intervention – Item 5 Topic 4 Responsibility and Accountability

The UK notes the many references in the proposals before us that emphasise that human beings must remain accountable for decisions over the use of force.

The UK agrees with this. The use of autonomous weapons systems does not, and cannot, negate an individual's responsibility under International Humanitarian Law. Accountability for the effects of military action cannot be transferred to a machine.

The subject of responsibility and accountability is bound up in issues concerning articulations of human involvement and risk ownership. Human responsibility for the use of AI-enabled systems in Defence must be underpinned by a clear and consistent articulation of the means by which human control is exercised, and the nature and limitations of that control. While the level of human involvement will vary according to the context and capabilities of each AI-enabled system, the ability to exercise human judgement over their outcomes is essential.

In relation to this, UK practice is that accountability measures are built in throughout the weapon system lifecycle – from concept, to initial development, through the assessment of legal use and acceptance into service, and ultimately the decision to deploy a system operationally within Command and Control structures and Rules of Engagement. This is assured by compliance with the technical standards governing their development, analysis to support the allocation of function between human and machine and the Interaction between them, test and acceptance processes, observance of national and international legal obligations and rigorous field-testing procedures and training of those using those systems. As such, the UK already operates a robust framework for ensuring that any new weapon or weapon system can be used legally

under IHL. New weapons and weapons systems are conceived and created to fulfil a specific requirement and are tested for compliance with international law obligations at several stages of development. They must allow operators and commanders to understand the operating parameters of the system and must also allow relevant Rules of Engagement to be complied with.

Once deployed, accountability is vested in the trained operators who employ the system, and in the decisions taken by commanders at every level who have operational or tactical responsibility for the conduct of a campaign and the specialists who advise them. Responsibility is discharged through the military Chain of Command, and accountability measures are set out clearly in the orders, directives and Standard Operating Procedures that are enforced by all responsible militaries engaged in the conduct of operations.

Such measures as undertaken by the UK to ensure responsibility and accountability represent good practices that would be of assistance to all states that are developing weapons systems that include autonomous functions. Therefore, they are an example of what might be included in a GGE outcome that focuses on the sharing and collating of good practices for applying IHL to autonomous weapons systems, providing a clearer picture over what levels or uses of autonomy would and would not be acceptable.

Furthermore, the draft articles proposal that the UK has co-sponsored alongside Australia, Canada, Japan, RoK and the US also proposes, under Article 6, a series of Regulatory Measures to ensure accountability. These measures would ensure comprehensive accountability for the use of autonomous weapon systems and I commend those to this group