

United Kingdom – General statement

Agenda Item 5

Mr Chair

At the outset, let me congratulate you on assuming your renewed mandate as Chair of this group. Your determination, perseverance and resilience in this duty is an example to all of us.

I take the floor in the first session of our meeting to underline the United Kingdom's sponsorship of two proposals before the Group.

Firstly, as my US colleague has already announced, the UK is pleased to co-sponsor the paper circulated this morning on prohibitions and other regulatory measures on the basis of international humanitarian law.

The UK agrees that this new proposal represents significant progress on what this Group needs to do to ensure effective implementation of IHL with regard to weapons that contain autonomous functions. We look forward to working alongside our co-sponsors and other delegations in progressing the ideas contained in this paper further.

Secondly, I would like to remind the Group of the proposal that the UK has introduced, on the elaboration of a document, or manual, that would constitute an authoritative and comprehensive statement of the application of International Humanitarian Law and agreed best

practice. We have noted the importance of the need for all weapons - including those that have autonomous functions - to comply with international humanitarian law is a central principle of almost all of the proposals that have been submitted to us.

The UK's proposal is for the GGE to commission a document that sets out guidelines, advice and best practices on how States should approach the development and use of emerging technologies in the area of LAWS at each stage of its lifecycle. This would include an assessment on any characteristics which would be necessary for compliance with IHL and any characteristics which would be incompatible with IHL.

The document might include examples that illustrate what good practice is or might look like, providing a clear framework for the operationalisation of the GGE guiding principles and actionable guidance for policy, technical, and military stakeholders. It would thereby encourage the adoption of national regulations designed to strengthen respect for international law.

Our paper outlines suggestions for areas that might be included in the document. We have previously stated that these areas should not be viewed as exhaustive or definitive, but simply as an example of the sorts of things such a document could cover – it would be a handrail for the GGE. As well as the primacy of the need to comply with IHL, the UK also notes that many of the issues that would need to be included in such a document have been referred to in many of the proposals that have been put before this group. Therefore, we welcome the agenda for this week and hope that it can increase understanding of these issues and the need for the type of document that the UK has proposed.

Finally, Mr Chair, let me say how encouraged my delegation is by the level of engagement in the work of this Group, and in particular by the number and range of specific proposals now on the table. This represents a real step-change in the level of discussion. We hope that

by engaging with the detail of these proposals, we will be able to identify the commonalities and convergencies between them, and thereby move our work forwards. As ever, you can count on the full support of my delegation in that task.

Thank you.