Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I begin by congratulating you, Ambassador in den Bosch, for taking up this important responsibility of chairing the CCW GGE on LAWS. Having occupied this chair in the last two years, I might have a good appraisal on how demanding, complex and exacting your challenges will be. Yet I also know that we could not be in better hands, as we begin this new and crucial phase of discussions on what is one of the most threatening among emerging technologies in the field of international security. Complex security scenarios coupled with rapid technological change generate a very dangerous mix.

The report of the 2023 session of the GGE represented a fine balance among dissonant viewpoints. Consensus outcomes are not perfect outcomes. Those seeking more ambitious steps experience frustration, while those that think we might have gone too far will try to apply the brakes in the next round. Nevertheless, a dispassionate view would point that the report offers a sound framework for future discussions, by including two very important substantive elements.

First, it consolidated a common understanding on the need for a “two-tier approach” to address the issue of autonomous weapon systems, based on prohibitions and regulations. Second, the report highlighted the issue of control as a key element for ensuring compliance with IHL.

It is our hope that the GGE will now be able to build from its past achievements and live up to the high expectations of the international Community in this regard.

We now have the advantage of a multi-year mandate, thus avoiding the recurrent and difficult exercise of its yearly rediscussing. On the other hand, complacency is not an option. We are not to bask in the glory of previous results and squander this opportunity. The neck-breaking speed of technological advances is rapidly closing the window of opportunity for regulation. At the risk of being repetitive, dithering is out of question.
We cannot deny that there is a growing debate as to whether the GGE is the right conduit for progress, as its pace of deliberations is not the one we expect. Yet few doubt the extent of the expertise that this body brings together. Likewise, the extent of divergences is not to be minimized. Expertise and divergence - in the right doses - should be the foundation for results capable of passing the tests of effectiveness, compliance, and universalization. Outcomes failing to properly regulate a weapons system, or that are not abided by its parties, or that are not unanimously accepted as a basis for the conduct in the battlefield will not be serving well the progressive development of international law. This is the challenge that the GGE should rise up to.

Mr. Chairman,

The GGE will work against the backdrop of increasing awareness of the wider challenges of military applications of artificial intelligence. Your country, Mr. Chairman, has been playing a catalyst role in those discussions, through the REAIM process initiated in the Hague conference last year. While there are many intersections between the issue of military applications of AI and our work on LAWS, the latter has many specificities, as well as an “acquis” of substantive common understandings that needs to be preserved.

Turning now to the work ahead of us this week, I thank you for the preparation of well-structured guiding questions that provide an avenue for progress. Brazil has submitted its views and is carefully studying the compilation of national responses issued last Friday. We commend the Secretariat for the efforts in promptly putting together this most useful document.

On the three areas in which you asked the High Contracting parties’ opinion, I will make, at this juncture, one observation regarding characterization and definitions without prejudice to further in-depth presentations to be made during this week. We believe that this issue can give rise to endless discussions, as we try to finesse a common understanding regarding a weapons system. Of course, a common understanding is desirable but not at the price of procrastinating progress indefinitely. We have useful past examples derived from protocols within the CCW and other arms controls and disarmament agreements in which technologically neutral formulations were developed. They carefully avoided the pitfalls of seeking excessive precision regarding the characteristics and definitions, but also provided enough guardrails to enable operationalization of concrete provisions.

Brazil will carry on with its steadfast commitment to the GGE. I draw your attention to the working paper submitted last week by Brazil on the possible contributions to the work of the GGE that can be derived from the global ontological standards for ethically driven robotics and automation systems published in 2021 by the Institute of Electric and Electronics Engineers (IEEE). These standards offer a sound technical basis for the development of norms related to autonomous weapon systems, in particular in terms of confidence-building measures. Likewise, we will co-host tomorrow, at lunch time, with Australia an event on legal review of autonomous weapon systems, which dovetails perfectly with the technical approach we are proposing.

We look forward to a very enriching and substantive debate in the following days.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.