Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects

15 November 2024

English only

Geneva, 13-15 November 2024
Agenda item 8
Update by the Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) related to emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS)

Working Paper*

Submitted by Germany

1. Germany shares other contracting parties' assessment that questions and challenges related to autonomous weapons systems are among today's most pressing and complex issues in the field of arms control. Against this background, and given the enormous speed of technological developments, the **work of the GGE remains of utmost importance and the GGE the key international forum to address legal and humanitarian challenges emanating from employing autonomous functions in weapons systems**. It is an important signal and will highly enrich our discussions in substance that Singapore and Trinidad and Tobago, having joined the CCW as High Contracting Parties, are now also members of the GGE.

2. Germany highly appreciates the **efforts undertaken by the chair and his team** in order to bring the GGE further towards fulfilment of its mandate, and your skilful leadership in this regard. We particularly appreciated the excellent texts that were circulated in preparation of our meetings as an extremely helpful basis for our discussions, enabling us to move towards our urgent and important goal – namely to formulate a set of elements of an instrument.

3. The topics that were chosen for discussion – **characterizations and definitions, application of IHL, risk mitigation and confidence-building measures, and accountability and responsibility** - are at the core of our complex discussion about lethal autonomous weapons systems. While last year's work demonstrated that questions related to these topics are among the most difficult ones in the context of the GGE, our discussions and consultations also proved how important it is that states continue to work hard in order to build up more convergence exactly in these areas, and that this is the only way how to identify elements of a landing zone that can be acceptable in consensus. We welcome our work on the basis of the "rolling text" as an excellent opportunity in this regard.

4. For Germany, it remains paramount to ensure that any weapons systems will only be developed, deployed, or used **within a framework of human control**. Our discussions in the past months have confirmed our impression that there is broad agreement on substance in this regard – whatever language countries choose to circumscribe the importance of the human element in decisions about the use of force. And despite the immense difficulties that are particularly related to this aspect, we think it can be possible to find a way for consensus in this regard.

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

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5. Germany very much welcomes last year's discussions about **"unintended biases",** including those based on gender aspects. We look forward to continuing this important debate.

6. The valuable report of the UN Secretary General on LAWS demonstrated that many states are of the view that these results should be based on prohibitions and regulations – as does Germany. We will continue to work towards an **effective prohibition** of fully autonomous weapons systems in the framework of the CCW, and towards regulations of weapons systems with autonomous functions. The CCW is in our view uniquely suited for this difficult endeavour.

7. The debate on lethal autonomous weapons systems has further intensified in the course of the past year, **including in the context of the First Committee**. We welcome that this year's First Committee resolution underlines the centrality of the GGE and thank AUT and the co-sponsors for taking on board so many member states' clear position in this regard. We also acknowledge the overwhelming support for the resolution as a strong signal that the international community wants to finally achieve tangible results, and we congratulate Austria and the co-sponsors of the resolution on LAWS for having tabled a text that achieved broad support. We sincerely hope that next year's meeting in New York will complement the work and contribute to progress of the GGE on LAWS.

8. As in past years, we very much welcomed the **contributions from civil society** that enriched our discussions, bringing important aspects to the attention of the group.

9. The result-oriented work of the GGE under your leadership, Ambassador in den Bosch, offers an excellent opportunity to further existing convergence. We stand ready to spare no efforts in order to further support your work, and we call upon all High Contracting Parties to seize the remaining time of the GGE's mandate and to continue the discussion in a constructive and result-oriented spirit.

10. Germany will continue to actively engage in the framework of the GGE on LAWS.