



PERMANENT MISSION OF GREECE  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE & THE OTHER  
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS  
GENEVA

## **STATEMENT by GREECE**

### **Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS)**

**Geneva, 25-29 March 2019**

### **Potential challenges posed by emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems to International Humanitarian Law**

Thank you Mr Chair for giving me the floor,

Greece fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union

Mr President,

The use of any Weapon System in compliance with the provisions of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) requires a degree of human control over its use in the battlefield. Moreover, the conformity or not of the use of weapon systems with the provisions of IHL should be directly linked to the outcome of the attack and to whether the cardinal principles of IHL and other applicable International Law, including International Customary Law have been respected before and during the attack.

Hence, it is important to ensure that commanders and operators will remain on the loop of the decision making process in order to apply the appropriate human judgment over the use of force, for reasons not only related to accountability, but also-and-mainly to the protection of human dignity over the decision on life or death.

Bearing the above in mind, and as we have stated in the past the compliance of fully LAWS with the provisions of IHL and its cardinal principles remains dubious. This is because based on the current technological capabilities it is doubtful whether it is possible to insert (programme) beforehand into autonomous weapon systems the compliance with sophisticated legal/evaluative concepts, such as the principles of (target) discrimination and proportionality, particularly considering the constantly diversifying environment of a battlefield.

Mr President

The fully lethal autonomous weapon system, in our view, is a type of weapon whose mission cannot be terminated by human intervention once it is launched or deployed. Furthermore, it has the capacity to learn and undertake on its own a range of critical functions, such as detection, selection and engagement of military targets. Therefore, it has the ability both to adapt to its operational environment and to select the appropriate action to accomplish its mission through alternatives based on its capabilities, without human intervention.

In this context, the main concerns arising from the potential development and use of LAWS revolves around their predictability and reliability during the operational stage. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to ensure that any new weapon with high degree of autonomy on its critical functions will be tested during its development stage in all foreseeable scenarios of its use.

Furthermore, the constraints on the use of weapons that may arise during the operational scenarios must be integrated into military instructions in order to facilitate the decision making process of the commanders and operators on whether to deploy or not such a weapon in the battlefield.

In this vein, the provisions of Article 36 of the Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions provides us with the necessary framework to ensure that the use of weapon systems will be in compliance with the cardinal principles of IHL in all circumstances of use.

Mr President, Dear colleagues,

The ongoing discussion related to the impact of emerging technologies on weapon systems constitutes a complicated and challenging issue. Particularly, the potential incorporation into weapon systems of algorithms with the ability of self-learning aiming at the development and improvement of their capabilities and at the adaptation to their operational environment has put into question the efficiency of the current legal framework to address the arising challenges.

In this context, we would like to reiterate that Greece strongly believes that the CCW remains the appropriate forum to continue discussing the issue of LAWS, with a view to further enhancing our common understanding on the multiple legal, ethical, military and technical aspects involved.

Thank you.