Statement

by

Ambassador Sahebzada A. Khan
Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan
to the United Nations

at the

First Committee Thematic Debate on Other Disarmament
Measures and International Security

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Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan aligns itself with the statement made by the Non-Aligned Movement.

The fast pace of technological innovations is changing the way international law can and should govern their development, deployment and use. The way some of the new and emerging technologies are used, has impact on and implications for international peace and security.

While the international community is justifiably focused on the impact of weapons of mass destruction on international security, especially nuclear weapons, the rapid development of new weapons technologies in the conventional weapons domain, also pose serious threats to international peace and security. Such threats are even more urgent and real because these new weapons reduce or eliminate the danger of human casualties for the user states and, therefore, increase the propensity for their use. The net result is lowering of the threshold for resort to armed conflict.

This reality is underscored by the increasing and indiscriminate use of new weapons such as armed drones.

In our view, the use of armed drones, especially against civilians, constitutes a violation of international law, the UN Charter, international humanitarian as well as human rights laws. Their use also contravenes State sovereignty and the UN Charter restrictions on legitimate use of force for self-defense, in the absence of imminent danger and without express permission from States in whose territory the armed drones are used. The established principles of distinction, proportionality, transparency and accountability are also violated.

Mr. Chairman,

The UN Human Rights Council, jurists and human rights groups have all opposed armed drones targeting civilians through 'signature strikes' and termed their use as tantamount to extrajudicial killings since no due process of law is followed.

Moreover, the proliferation of drone technology over time would make their use more dangerous and widespread.
Even more challenging would be the task of preventing and deterring non-state actors and terrorists from developing, deploying and using drones against people or even States. When such technology spreads, their use could lead to miscalculations and even eruption of inter-State conflicts.

Mr. Chairman,

Another destabilizing development is the advent of Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems or LAWS.

The autonomous or independent target selection and use of lethal force by machines poses serious legal and moral questions and has implications for the laws of war. In the absence of any human intervention, LAWS may in fact change the nature of war.

The use of LAWS also raises serious concerns about targeting of civilians and non-combatants. It may also flow into the 'signature' targeting domain. There is no clarity on affixation of responsibility and no human control in the judgment on the use of these weapons.

In the light of these factors, the use of LAWS violates international law including International Humanitarian and Human Rights laws. As in the case of armed drones, the important issues of transparency and accountability also need to be addressed.

Mr. Chairman,

Similarly, the growing prospect of cyber warfare needs to be addressed urgently before such weapons breakdown the entire edifice of international security.

In recent years, the use of information and communications technologies have not only been used for indiscriminate surveillance in violation of the international legal regime, including the right to privacy, freedom of expression and information, but also as a means of waging cyber attacks. Since no one can have a monopoly over such technology, its proliferation will ensure a new form of conflict through cyber space.

Misuse and un-regulated use of ICT could lead to serious implications for international peace and security in the event of a cyber attack launched on critical infrastructure such as electricity grids, disruption of satellites, weather forecasting and even the security
infrastructure of states. In this context, the hostile use of cyber technologies can indeed be characterized as a new weapon of mass destruction and disruption.

In view of these dangerous technological developments, it is essential to regulate their production and use sooner rather than later. Evolution of legal norms and laws are urgently needed for international control over the development, production, deployment and use of weapons such as armed drones, LAWS and cyber weapons.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.