Thank you for the floor, Chairman.

I am pained to have to say that the CCW is failing. It is failing to address the issue of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems in an urgent manner, as is demanded, as is required. We do not want the CCW to fail on this, as the implications could be catastrophic.

Ambassador Gill has been promoting a multi-pronged approach to dealing with LAWS, with action at the international, national, and industry levels. The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, which Human Rights Watch co-founded, has been following that model since its inception in 2013. Indeed, that approach is the only one that will be successful in bringing about a preemptive ban on fully autonomous weapons.

On the industry side, the Artificial Intelligence and Robotics communities have been outspoken in support of a preemptive ban. It has been an astounding level of engagement from the scientific community, which is usually reluctant on what some may see as a political issue.

You are all aware that thousands of scientists and AI and robotics experts have signed an open letter calling for a preemptive ban. More recently, in August, at the very time this Group of Governmental Experts should have been meeting, more than one hundred founders of AI companies issued an open letter consistent with the call for a ban, and they urged the CCW to take immediate action. CCW states parties need to listen to these true experts.

On the national level, there are legislative initiatives in many nations, including calls for a ban.

And while we have congratulated CCW states parties for taking up this issue in a timely fashion in 2013, the biggest disappointment in this multi-pronged approach has been the foot-dragging at the international level, here in the CCW.

We share the disappointment expressed by many countries that there is only one week of work on LAWS this year, and so far this week, we are treading water at best.

We appreciate the many calls for a preemptive ban this week, and we appreciate the hard and thoughtful work of many delegations, including those who submitted working papers.

We take note of the potential steps forward proposed by a number of states, including a political declaration, best practices, guidelines, a code of conduct, and enhanced weapons review processes.
There may be useful aspects to some of these proposals, but they are clearly inadequate as a response to the dangers of fully autonomous weapons. They all seem to pre-suppose the pursuit of LAWS and they all would serve to slow progress toward the only real solution: a preemptive ban.

When will the CCW move from talk shop or graduate seminar to action? GGEs are for government deliberations, not government Q and As with academics and outside experts.

When will the CCW get down to drawing the line, to determining the nature and level of meaningful human control needed for autonomous weapons? The groundwork has been laid. Please build on it.

As our Campaign Coordinator noted, we support the continuation of the GGE next year, but you should do more than just roll over the existing mandate. The time devoted to the issue should be expanded to at least four weeks. That is the only time the CCW has been successful on an issue, when it devotes that amount of time or more.

In addition, the objective of the GGE should be more ambitious. It should not just be aimed at formulating “options” for future work. Those four or more weeks should be seen as preparations for negotiations.

States Parties should then agree to a formal negotiating mandate at the end of 2018, and conclude a new protocol, Protocol VI, by the end of 2019 – a protocol that bans the development, production, and use of fully autonomous weapons.

Thank you.