Statement by PAX  
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CCW Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems  
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Thank you Mr. Chair,

PAX co-founded the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots out of a range of legal, security and operational concerns, but first and foremost because of ethical concerns. A machine should never be allowed to make the decision over life and death. This goes against the principles of human dignity and the right to life. Outsourcing decisions to kill to a machine, to algorithms, means outsourcing morality.

So far, 20 states called for a ban on LAWS. But many other states have expressed serious concerns as well and we welcome the recent working paper of the NAM.

With autonomy increasing in weapon systems, humans delegate certain activities and decisions to machines. It is therefore logical that the question of what level of human control must be maintained over weapon systems, plays a central role in our discussions. And most states have expressed that meaningful human control should be a central element in the discussions regarding LAWS. Now to move the discussion further, states should in our eyes therefore work towards a common understanding of which decisions and actions should be under human control and how to ensure that this control is meaningful, appropriate or adequate.

Here in Geneva we speak about emerging technology. But speaking about emerging technology implies we could continue to discuss this issue for the rest of the CCW life span... But the question is where do we draw the line and how to safeguard that line? We feel that in the meetings over the last years the discussions have broadened and became so complex that we run the risk to lose sight over the core question, namely where do we draw the line and what level of human control – and when and over what - is necessary to make a weapon system legally and ethically acceptable?

And we hope that in your deliberations on the acceptability of these weapons, you also imagine yourself being on the receiving end, instead of being a citizen from a high tech nation on the forefront of deploying these weapons. Such a thought exercise can maybe help us in our discussions.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to two papers PAX released this week. The first report ‘where to draw the line?’ shows the trend towards increasing autonomy in weapon systems by identifying a number of systems which have the ability to select and attack targets with automated ‘critical’ functions.

The second report ‘Keeping Control’ provides an overview of the positions of European states on LAWS. PAX analyses where states take similar positions and where they diverge.
The reports are at the table in the back of the room and we hope they can contribute to the discussion and be an impetus on our way towards an international treaty banning weapon systems without meaningful human control over the critical functions.

Thank you.