Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS)
Geneva, 27-31 August 2018
Possible options for addressing the humanitarian and international security challenges posed by LAWS
Intervention by Bulgaria

Mr. Chairman,

Our delegation highly appreciates your devotion and your ingenious and successful guidance on the GGE deliberations.

The 2018 GGE meeting once again acknowledges the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons as the appropriate forum for discussions on issues and concepts related to the emerging technologies in the area of LAWS.

This week's constructive and fruitful deliberations on autonomous weapons systems display State Parties' willingness to move the matter further ahead towards result-oriented debate.

During the discussions on human-machine interaction most State parties acknowledged the necessity human control to be exercised over the whole life cycle of an autonomous weapons system – design, validation, deployment, use and assessment.

As the systems under consideration generate humanitarian and ethical concerns, we share the mutual understanding that life and death choices must be made by humans, not autonomous machines.

Human control must be exerted in compliance with the international humanitarian law and international human rights law and their core principles. The responsibility for unlawful and indiscriminate actions of autonomous systems must be maintained by officials in the military hierarchy as these systems must be subordinate to them. Law pertains to humans. So, accountability cannot be reassigned to machines as they are not legal agents.

Mr. Chairman

The rapid progress in autonomous technologies could significantly affect the security environment and relations between States. Therefore, the work of the GGE should not be outpaced by developments in related technologies. The challenges raised by LAWS demand State parties to concentrate their efforts on various approaches in response to them.

In our view, conducting legal weapon reviews under Article 36 of the Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Convention serves as an important tool to assure that use and development of autonomous weapons systems is in compliance with IHL rules and regulations. Considering the
multidimensional and intricate nature of LAWS, the processes of reviewing autonomous systems would be a challenging and complex issue.

Given the fact that weapon review processes are national internal procedures, our delegation sees great value in practical measures such as information exchange, sharing best practices and public access to Article 36 procedures and results to enhance transparency and confidence building among State parties.

In April, the Bulgarian delegation expressed its support for the Franco-German proposal for pursuing a political declaration. Today, we would like to reconfirm our decision in favor of the political declaration. In our view, the proposed political declaration is a balanced document that encompasses aspects with high degree of convergence among State parties within the GGE. Yesterday, thanks to its pragmatic character, the political declaration met a broad approval from different State parties.

We believe that the political declaration could give impetus to the GGE deliberations and to act as an essential step towards more tangible results in assessing the security challenges posed by LAWS and addressing them accordingly.

Last, but not least, the Bulgarian delegation favors continuation of the mandate of the GGE through 2019.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman