August 2018 (6d)
Mr. Chairperson,

In addition to the statement delivered by the European Union I would like to say a few words in a national capacity. We would like to thank for all presentations made during this week and extend a warm thank you to you Mr. Chair for your leadership in guiding the GGE towards its next phase.

Finland sees the debate on future regulation of lethal autonomous weapons systems mainly from the point of view of highlighting the body of law which is crucial in this respect, namely international humanitarian law. It is true that autonomous weapon systems are not specifically regulated by current IHL treaties. However, it is undisputed that any autonomous weapon system must be used only in accordance with IHL. The responsibility for ensuring this rests with each State that is developing, deploying and using any weapons.

Because of the ongoing development and seamless shift from automation to more autonomous functioning, it would in our view be problematic to set different standards or requirements for existing weapon systems and for new types of systems. Now and in the foreseeable future, both automated and autonomous systems perform tasks assigned by human operators, who bear ultimate responsibility for the use of these systems.

The obligation to carry out legal reviews of new weapons under article 36 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions is crucial for ensuring that a State’s armed forces are capable of conducting hostilities in accordance with its international obligations. We call for the universalization of this important protocol and welcome the suggestion put forward in this regard by the distinguished ambassador of Argentina and would be interested in learning more about standardizing article 36 review mechanisms and sharing best practices thereafter.

Mr. Chairperson,

We feel that the focus of our debate in the next GGE should be on trust; trust between a human and a machine in respect to the authorization of force. Only trusted systems can be authorized to execute tasks defined by humans. While technology is developing, the trusted space of operation (such as the time-window, the geographical area, etc.) may be enlarged. Preconditions that are critical to be met in order to achieve trust in autonomous task definition and execution should be further examined. Concrete examples of emerging positive technological innovations on one hand and undesired and unpredictable aspects of machine autonomy on the other hand would continue to help in guiding our discussions further.

In conclusion Mr. Chairperson, we share the sentiment of those delegations which feel that the time is ripe for taking steps toward meeting the challenges posed by emerging lethal autonomous weapons systems. To meet this need for action and in response to the high interest raised on the issue in the public eye, Finland supports the Franco-German initiative to agree upon a set of principles which would remind us of our existing common commitments under IHL in the development and use of emerging weapons systems, increase transparency and encourage sharing of best practices in this regard. We feel that this type of commitment would best complement existing obligations and set a common understanding for future development of weapons systems. We look forward to discussing the matter more in depth in the next GGE in 2019.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.