Statement by the Delegation of Italy

Mr. Chair,

Since this is the first time that I am taking the floor, I would like to start by expressing Italy’s deep appreciation for the able and fruitful way in which you have steered our work. We remain fully engaged in this process and ready to cooperate with you for a successful outcome for our deliberations.

Italy aligns itself with the statements delivered by the European Union, and would like to share the following remarks in its national capacity.

Mr. Chair,

Our discussions in April and during this week have been very productive. They have shed further light on the different aspects relevant to the LAWS issue, highlighted areas on which common understandings are emerging, and others on which further analysis is needed.

Italy shares the principle, which clearly represents an element of convergence, that any weapon system, existing or future, must be subject to human control, particularly in relation to the ultimate decision to use force.

We also welcomed the shared reiteration that rules and principles of International Humanitarian Law must apply to all weapons systems, including LAWS. We continue to believe that our engagement towards the full implementation of, and respect for, the rules and principles of IHL must stand firm independently of the specificity of any weapon system. This includes the obligation to conduct legal reviews of weapons, means and methods of warfare, in accordance with art. 36 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions.

At the same time, we concur with other delegations that several aspects would merit further consideration, starting from the type and degree of human control that would be necessary to ensure that the development and use of systems with increasing autonomous functions is in compliance with IHL, and the modalities through which such control would be exercised. We found the presentations of existing weapons systems by the delegations of Sweden and the United States particularly useful in this regard, and would welcome more exchanges of this kind.

It would also be useful to continue analyzing the potential benefits of increasing autonomy in weapons systems, possible legal and humanitarian challenges related to their development and use, and how these could be addressed within the existing regulatory frameworks.
Mr. Chair,

In terms of the way forward, Italy’s position has not changed. Considering that many elements of the LAWS debate remain in flux, including a precise identification of what falls into this category of weapons systems, we remain convinced that a political declaration, setting out clear and agreed principles, represents the best option at this stage. We are aware, however, that despite the important elements of convergence I referred to above, there is still ample disagreement among the membership on how to translate these into a concrete outcome for this GGE.

For these reasons, we fully support the approach you have taken in your draft report, and its recommendations. The document builds on the work conducted from last year; highlights areas on which the debate has progressed and commonalities have emerged; reflects in a balanced way the different options presented by the membership on the way forward, and identifies issues to be further addressed, thus offering a solid basis for continuation of our work in 2019.

Thank you, Mr. Chair