Mr. President

As it is the first time I take the floor allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of your duties as President of the GGE for a second year in a row and assure you of our delegation’s full support in your endeavors to lead our meetings to a positive outcome.

The Hellenic Republic fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union. In addition, I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Mr. President,

The ongoing discussion related to the impact of emerging technologies on weapon systems constitutes a complicated and challenging issue since we have to address parameters related to ethical, political and legal dimensions.

In particular, with regards to the development and use of Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS), one of the issues that must be addressed is the potential incorporation into LAWS algorithms with the ability of learning (machine learning) for the development and improvement of their capabilities as well as for their adaptation to the operational environment.

Mr. President,

As we have stated in the past, the conformity or not of LAWS with the provisions of IHL and its cardinal principles such as distinction, proportionality and precautions in attack remains dubious.

However, it must be noted that current weapon systems with high degree of autonomy when used for defensive purposes, such as the protection of critical military assets, infrastructures or even cities from incoming threats, have not raised the question of non-compliance with the principles of International Law, although sometimes they act fully autonomously due to the limited time to eliminate the threat.
Mr. President,

Operational Planning is of utmost importance in Military Strategy and consists of a sequence of steps through which humans formulate overall goals, gather intelligence, identify and select targets and decide under what circumstances and preconditions to deploy a weapon.

In this context, weapon systems with high degree of autonomy have increased the operational depth of missions and have made weapon systems able to achieve greater accuracy and faster deployment on the battlefield.

Hence, it is important to ensure that commanders and operators will remain on the loop of the decision making process in order to ensure the appropriate human judgment over the use of force, not only for reasons related to accountability but mainly to protect human dignity over the decision on life or death.

The fully lethal autonomous weapon system, in our view, is a type of weapon that once launched or deployed (human decision) its mission cannot be terminated by human intervention. Furthermore, it has the capacity to learn and to undertake on its own a range of critical functions, such as detection and engagement of targets. Therefore, it has the ability without human intervention both to adapt to its operational environment and to select the appropriate action to accomplish its mission through alternatives based on its capabilities.

In this context it must be stressed that “lethal” by definition means having the ability to cause death; so our view of what constitutes a fully Lethal Autonomous Weapon System do not concern weapons whose their mission is to eliminate incoming threats, such as air missiles or mortars.

Mr. President,

The legal framework necessary to ensure that any new weapons including LAWS, will be used in compliance with the provisions of International Law has already, been provided by Article 36 of the Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions and, of course, by the Martens Clause.

Therefore the implementation of the aforementioned article by States constitutes the necessary tool in order to establish a common understanding of the potential challenges for the implementation of International Law by the use of emerging technologies, such as AI and machine learning in current and future weapon systems.
Mr. President,

We are living in an era where emerging technologies have influenced almost every sector of our daily life providing us with both innovations and challenges. One of the main challenges which must be addressed is the potential development and application of LAWS, a challenge which is our duty to guide through safe paths in order to enable States to safeguard the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law which in turn will provide the necessary safeguards for the protection of human values.

In this context, we strongly believe that the CCW remains the appropriate forum to continue discussing this issue of LAWS, with a view to further enhancing our common understanding on the multiple technical, legal, ethical, and military aspects involved.

Thank you