I thank you Mr. Chairman,

As this is the first time I am taking the floor, allow me to thank you for steering this group so skillfully and for handling this timely and complex subject matter in such an organized manner.

Luxembourg fully aligns itself with the statement that was delivered earlier by the European Union. Since my delegation has not yet positioned itself on the question of “Lethal autonomous weapon systems (LAWS)”, we wanted to share our thoughts and add our voice to the ongoing discussion.

During last year’s GGE we heard the different positions of many countries, and it became apparent that these positions vary to a great degree. While some countries advocate for an outright ban-treaty of LAWS, others point to the lack of a working definition and the impossibility to regulate at such an early stage.

Taking into account the positions expressed at both ends of the spectrum, Luxembourg fully supports the proposal to develop a political declaration made by Germany and France in their working paper GGE.1/2017/WP.4. We see this proposal as a reasonable and achievable middle ground in the near future. The principles for such a declaration are already laid out in the working paper and we agree that this would be a first step in the right direction.

We want to highlight in particular the references to:

1) The urgency of taking action now in order to guide the development of LAWS;
2) The confirmation that humans should continue to be able to make the ultimate decision in regards to the use of lethal force;
3) The fact that the political declaration should be viewed as a first step, and not an end in itself. The way forward would be the development of a code of conduct, containing politically binding rules.

There are a number of fields in which we are unable to agree on a definition, but have still managed to cooperate effectively in the multilateral sphere. A political declaration would be helpful in this regard, by capturing the intentions of States Parties and focusing on the general principles I have just mentioned.

The second point I want touch upon is the applicability of International Humanitarian Law. Luxembourg agrees that the provisions of IHL must fully apply to autonomous weapons systems. In order to fully comply with IHL, we believe that a certain degree of meaningful human control is mandatory:
Fundamental principles of IHL, such as proportionality and the distinction between military personnel and civilians, can only be guaranteed if there remains an element of meaningful human control during the stages of target selection and for the ultimate decision of taking a human life. Besides the ethical arguments to be made in favour of this principle, we also believe it is a prerequisite for the compliance with IHL. Furthermore, meaningful human control would guarantee that there remains responsibility and accountability for the use of LAWS.

Finally, I want to conclude by concurring with most of the speakers that the emergence of artificial intelligence will have an increasing impact on our lives and on the economies of our countries. We expect that this impact will mostly be positive – its uses in the civilian sector, from health and education, to industrial or agricultural production and transport, will continue to grow rapidly and we should be careful not to constrain the potential of this technology. However, being aware of the benefits of a certain technology should not prevent us from managing the associated risks.

It seems that the guiding principles of a large part of the technology sector was possibility and profitability: neither principle is sufficient when it comes to technologies, which, in the words of many concerned scientists and civil society actors, can put the survival of humanity at risk. We believe that it is vital to take action now in order to guide the development of autonomous weapons systems and we hope that this year’s GGE can achieve this objective.

Thank you for your attention.