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PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN

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MEETING OF THE HIGH CONTRACTING PARTIES OF THE
CONVENTION ON PROHIBITIONS OR RESTRICTIONS ON THE USE OF CERTAIN CONVENTIONAL
WEAPONS WHICH MAY BE DEEMED TO BE EXCESSIVELY INJURIOUS OR TO HAVE INDISCRIMINATE
EFFECTS

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR DR. PETER MATT,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Mr Chair,

I am honored to take the floor during this meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the CCW. Let me first congratulate you on your appointment as Chair and ensure you of Liechtenstein's full support and cooperation. The CCW provides a highly relevant framework for us to discuss consequences of the use of certain conventional weapons and, increasingly, the effects of technological developments on the use of such weapons, including their legal and humanitarian implications. We thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations for raising our collective awareness of the harmful potential of certain developments in the area of artificial intelligence. A future scenario where machines have the power and the discretion to take human lives is morally unacceptable and ought to be preventively addressed by the international community. Our collective aim should be to ensure a human component in the decision-making processes of lethal weapons systems. Liechtenstein fully shares the Secretary-General's sense of urgency in that respect.

Mr. Chair,

International law, in particular international humanitarian law, sets out clear responsibilities for States and individuals that cannot be transferred away from a human decision-maker to a machine. International humanitarian law applies to very specific and clearly defined situations, in which the principles of necessity, proportionality and distinction are to be respected at all times. An element of human control within lethal weapons systems used in such situations is an essential precondition to ensure compliance with applicable law. Moreover, States have obligations under other international legal frameworks, including human rights law, that protect rights of individuals from undue interference and restriction – obligations that are in many cases difficult if not impossible to reconcile with the idea of fully autonomous lethal weapons systems. Moreover, a number of serious questions arise with respect to ensuring accountability for violations of international law by autonomous lethal weapons systems that need to be addressed preventively and urgently.

Mr. Chair

To be clear, addressing the challenges arising from lethal autonomous weapons systems is not a political choice. States have a clear obligation to determine whether the employment, in any circumstances, of a new weapon, means or method of warfare is prohibited under international law, pursuant to article 36 of the First Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions. The Group of Governmental Experts has conducted valuable work in setting out a number of guiding principles for future discussion. But it has also been shown its limits as far as the way forward is concerned. In line with our obligations under international humanitarian law, States must enter into concrete discussions on how to legally ensure a human component in the decision-making processes of lethal autonomous weapons systems. Now is the right time to initiate a process for establishing new standards in this area. The format of future discussion should be inclusive and allow for an adequate legal response, in line with existing obligations, to the threats and challenges that present themselves very clearly today.

Thank you