Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

Agenda Item 8
Consideration of the report of the Group on Governmental Experts on emerging technologies in the area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems

Statement by Finland
Geneva, 21 November 2018

Thank you Mr. Chairperson,

In addition to the statement by the European Union, I would like to add a few words in a national capacity on this agenda item. We thank Ambassador Gill for his presentation here today and for his tireless work as Chair of the LAWS GGEs.

When considering the human element in the use of lethal force, Finland believes that compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law is a key component. The notion that humans will now and in the future exert control over decisions of life and death needs to remain at the center of our deliberations next year in the Group of Governmental Experts.

As we said in August, we feel that our discussions are actually reflecting the issue of 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. Preconditions that are critical to be met in order to achieve trust in autonomous task definition and execution should be further examined. Also, it would be helpful to hear more concrete examples of emerging positive technological innovations and benefits on one hand and undesired and unpredictable aspects of machine autonomy on the other hand.

Finland views the Group of Governmental Experts, working under the auspices of the CCW, as the relevant forum for discussions on LAWS and are in favor of extending its mandate into 2019. We see that meeting for 10 days next year, as recommended by the GGE in August, would be the most suitable option in order to gear the discussions towards a concrete and meaningful outcome in the near future.

The pace of work may not be as swift as some would hope, but we must not forget that LAWS is an exceptionally complex and multifaceted topic and cannot be compared to other arms control processes of recent years. We recognize that there are diverging views on the modalities of our work and we call on all delegations to show maximum flexibility in this regard. We also wish that a decision for a new Chairperson of this important process could be taken as soon as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.