Mr Chair

1. The UK aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union and its Member States and has some additional comments in its national capacity. I would like to begin by thanking the outgoing Chair of the Group of Government Experts (GGE), Ambassador Gill, for guiding us towards significant progress on the issue of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS).

2. The CCW continues to provide the right forum in which to discuss this issue owing to its access to international technical, military and diplomatic expertise. The UK recognises and welcomes the progress achieved over the two meetings of the LAWS GGE held during 2018 – particularly the August meeting, which saw increased consensus, including development of a set of emerging Guiding Principles and recognition of the centrality of human control – rather than technology – to the debate. However, further work is clearly needed to build an appropriate baseline of shared understanding on the threats and benefits of increasing autonomy in weapons systems.

3. The UK continues to consider the issue of LAWS in depth. We would like to see the agenda for 2019 shaped towards deepening the discussions on specific topics and away from a broader, less focused agenda. Such topics might include (but are not limited to): states' methodology for assessing their weapons' compliance with international law; targeting processes; accountability measures; and Defence and industry standards for guaranteeing human control throughout the lifecycle of a weapons system. We are keen to continue the development of shared understanding, which we sought to promote through the working paper submitted ahead of the last GGE and look forward to contributing further to international discussions next year.

4. The UK is committed to transparency as it develops its thinking on emerging capabilities. In addition to the working paper, in May 2018 the UK published Joint Concept Note 1/18 (JCN 1/18) on Human Machine Teamming, which articulates the challenges and opportunities that robotic and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies offer and identifies how we might seek to achieve strategic and operational advantage through human-machine interaction. JCN 1/18 aims to set out the UK's view of the developing role of robotics, AI and data in defence activity with a view to informing and guiding the development of our policy, strategy and force and capability development. We encourage states to publish their own doctrine and policies on autonomy in order to share good practice and increase common understanding.

5. Given the extensive ground still left to cover, the UK supports the extension of the GGE's existing mandate for a further year in order to build further consensus around the emerging Guiding Principles and deepen understanding in key areas of existing regulatory frameworks based on applicable international law, industry standards, policy and military doctrine, directives and procedures. The agenda for next year is important and warrants further discussion. We will continue to take a full and active role in next year's programme of work, in support of the GGE's new Chair and in line with the aims and purposes of the Convention.

Thank you.