European Union

EU Statement

Group of Governmental Experts

Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems

Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

Geneva, 25-29 March 2019

- Review of potential military applications of related technologies in the context of the Group’s work

Mr. Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The Candidate Countries North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, as well as Georgia align themselves with this statement.

At the outset, let me express our congratulations on your appointment as Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (GGE LAWS). We look forward to your steer in helping us to reach a successful outcome and encourage all States to engage constructively.

Thank you for this opportunity to continue reviewing potential military applications of related technologies in the context of the Group’s work, and for the pertinent questions in your non-paper.

The EU considers it worthwhile to review regularly and systematically the fast-paced technological developments relevant for the GGE’s work within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). The dynamics of science and industry are producing rapid advances in artificial intelligence which can also be used for military applications. We should also bear in mind that technologies in the area of artificial intelligence have a dual-use potential. Our work should not hamper progress in legitimate

* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
research and development activities, or legitimate innovation in high-technology industries like robotics.

It is likely that weapons systems with increasingly autonomous functions will be developed and deployed for specific tasks under the control, supervision of and alongside military personnel to complement existing weapons systems and other military and civilian technology.

All States must ensure that emerging technologies including Artificial Intelligence that could be used in lethal autonomous weapons systems are developed and used in compliance with international law, in particular International Humanitarian Law (IHL). National legal weapons reviews in compliance with IHL remain a relevant tool in this context. Humans need to remain in control of the development, deployment and use with regard to possible military applications of emerging technologies in the area of LAWS, including AI, and prevent the use of such technologies in a way that would violate international law.

In this context, there is a need for technology watch and foresight, and building networks with innovative industry even if not defence specific. Further awareness-raising and training activities should be considered to promote responsible innovation and encourage all stakeholders – scientists, industry, military and political-decision makers – to stay within the legal framework.

Thank you, Mr. Chair