Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to 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

Agenda Item 8. Consideration of the report of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) related to emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS)

Statement Austria

Mr. President,

Austria aligns itself with the EU Statement and wishes to make the following points in a national capacity. We thank the Chair of the GGE Ljupčo Jivan Gjorgjinski of North Macedonia for his excellent work and the presentation of the report.

The weaponization of artificial intelligence poses fundamental challenges to a broad range of weapons categories. We believe it is not only a responsibility or obligation, but also in our shared security interest to regulate the issue of lethal autonomous weapons systems before we are overtaken by facts on the ground. As mentioned earlier today, it is a legal, ethical and moral imperative that humans must remain in control of armed conflict and that human control over the weapons that are developed, deployed and used is maintained. As more and more political leaders voice their commitment that humans must remain in control over life and death, the GGE on LAWS should step up its efforts in order to allow the international community to implement this political will.

While Austria supports the immediate start of negotiations of a legally binding instrument to ensure meaningful human control over selecting and engaging targets, we believe it will be key for the success of the GGE LAWS in the next two years to advance substance and particularly to focus on the role of human beings and in particular meaningful human control.

While we urge the start of negotiations of a protocol, Austria is in the position to go along with the recommendation to use and further elaborate on past work „as a basis for the clarification, consideration and development of aspects of the normative and operational framework (on emerging technologies in the area of LAWS)“. In this spirit we are looking forward to the adoption of the 11 guiding principles by this conference as a step to prepare future negotiations of a legally-binding instrument.

Discussions in the past demonstrated that the time allocated was not sufficient. Austria therefore supports allocating 30 days for the GGE over the next two years.

The CCW does not exist in a vacuum. We cannot lose more time in the GGE while developments outside our diplomatic deliberations are creating facts on the ground. It is in our all shared security interest to establish baselines and give guidance to the international community.