Netherlands Statement

under agenda item 8, Consideration of the report of GGE LAWS

Meeting of the High Contracting Parties,

Geneva, 13 November 2019

by H.E. Robbert Jan Gabriëlse

Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
to the Conference on Disarmament
Mr. Chair,

In addition to the statement delivered by the EU, the Netherlands would like to make a few remarks in its national capacity.

Mr. Chair,

The Netherlands welcomes the final report of the 2019 GGE LAWS and calls for its adoption by the High Contracting Parties at this meeting.

The substantial progress that has been achieved over the last year by the GGE is encouraging, and demonstrates delegations’ willingness to address the issue of LAWS multilaterally and transparently. The Netherlands attaches great value to the inclusive and transparent process in the CCW in which all relevant stakeholders are represented. Let me echo other delegations in reaffirming the CCW as the most appropriate and effective forum to discuss the topic of LAWS.

The group has identified and agreed by consensus upon 11 Guiding Principles, which serve to situate lethal autonomous weapons systems in a strong common normative framework based on existing international law. The Netherlands fully endorses all Guiding Principles and is committed to their application in national policies. We encourage all High Contracting Parties to secure the progress the GGE has made by formally endorsing the agreed Guiding Principles during this meeting.

At the same time, we acknowledge that there is still work to be done, including but not limited to the further operationalization and elaboration of the Guiding Principles. We are optimistic that we will be able to reach consensus during this meeting on the allocation of a substantive number of meeting days for the GGE in 2020 and 2021 in order to be able to continue our work on the legal, technological and military aspects of LAWS, with sufficient time for the participation of national experts. The discussions thus far have shown that the topic of LAWS is complex and multifaceted, and requires a thorough and dedicated consideration with input from relevant experts. In particular, since we are discussing not one type of weapon system, but a technology, which can be applied in various systems in many different ways, the topic of LAWS differs in nature fundamentally from other conventional disarmament topics.

Mr. Chair,
LAWS should always remain under meaningful human control in order for their development and use to be in compliance with IHL. Although the degree and extent of human control that is necessary to meet IHL-requirements will depend on, inter alia, the context in which a weapon system is used, the nature of weapon system, and its tasking - the 11th Guiding Principle that was incorporated earlier this year confirms the importance of human-machine interaction as regards LAWS. The Netherlands supports various initiatives that serve to further operationalize meaningful human control in relation to the use of LAWS. We look forward to continue to make progress on this issue in the coming year and to share insights on this during the GGE’s 2020 and 2021 sessions.

Mr. Chair,

Let me conclude by thanking Mr. Jivan Gjorgjinski of North Macedonia for his leadership of the GGE LAWS in 2019.

Thank you.