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 BY THE UNITED KINGDOM
Geneva, 13 November 2019

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 Governmental Experts (GGE), Mr Jivan Gjorgjinski, for guiding us towards significant progress on the issue of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems.

2. The CCW continues to provide the right forum in which to discuss this issue owing to its access to international technical, military, legal, humanitarian and diplomatic expertise. The UK recognises and welcomes the progress achieved over the two formal meetings of the LAWS GGE held during 2019, particularly on the further elaboration of the Guiding Principles and the addition of an additional principle focused on human-machine interaction. We support the Chair’s recommendation that High Contracting Parties formally endorse the Guiding Principles at this meeting and look forward to further developing them over the course of the group’s future work.

3. The UK continues to consider the issue of LAWS in depth. We have previously detailed our national regulatory framework for the development and employment of military capabilities across their lifecycle in our 2018 working paper and in our interventions from the
floor. We welcome the contributions of other states who have also set out their processes and frameworks and support the calls of many contributors to continue to share relevant good practice and applicable norms. The UK contends that such norms and practices already form the basis of the ‘normative and operational framework’ referenced in the GGE Chair’s recommendations, but we acknowledge that there is a considerable amount of work to do in ensuring that the relevance and appropriateness of this framework to LAWS is fully understood and codified. We look forward to being a part of that important work.

4. Given the extensive ground still left to cover, the UK supports the extension of the GGE’s existing mandate to the 2021 CCW Review Conference in order to build further consensus around the 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; it is crucial that the GGE is allocated sufficient time for that work. The UK will continue to play a full and active role in the GGE, in support of the new Chair and in line with the aims and purposes of the Convention.

Thank you.