



CONVENTION ON CERTAIN CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

Informal Meeting of Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems

Statement by Joseph Ballard Deputy Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament

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May I first congratulate you on leading this first ever multilateral discussion on this very important topic. New Zealand welcomes this opportunity for High Contracting Parties to the CCW “to discuss the questions related to emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems.” Indeed, we feel this discussion is very valuable at this time, given the legal, technical, moral and ethical implications of those technologies.

Mr Chairman

The CCW, with its grounding in international humanitarian law, offers us a useful forum to begin to consider how force may be used in the context of the increasing weaponisation of autonomous technologies. We do not expect that this will be the only forum where such discussions will take place given the broad range of questions these technologies raise and given the wide-ranging perspectives of relevance. But the CCW’s broad membership, and its focus on protecting civilians and combatants from excessively injurious or indiscriminate weapons, makes it a suitable venue for us to intensify the dialogue which has already taken place elsewhere on these issues and to consider the underlying questions in greater depth.

Mr Chairman

Developments in the field of artificial intelligence hold considerable potential for improving our lives. But it is clear that, very importantly, they also offer the prospect of affecting the conduct of armed conflict and in doing so can present a number of benefits and risks. New Zealand, like many other High Contracting Parties, is beginning to consider the implications of these developments. Much will depend on how, collectively, we frame our discussions, on the definitions we use, and on the appropriate engagement of all relevant actors.

We welcome the broad coverage of this initial meeting’s agenda. From New Zealand’s perspective, it is important that these discussions consider not just specific technologies, or specific contexts in which technologies may be employed, but also more fundamental questions such as the role that we as humans need to play, in an increasingly automated future, in decisions to use lethal force. We look forward to considering these questions this week, and to contributing further to this evolving debate.

Thank you.