



**Statement by New Zealand**  
**GGE on Lethal Autonomous Weapons**  
**Systems**

**Human element in the use of lethal**  
**force; human-machine interaction**

**28 August 2018**

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**Further consideration of the human element in the use of lethal force; aspects of human-machine interaction in the development, deployment and use of emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems**

Thank you Mr Chair.

As this is the first time my delegation has taken the floor I wish to express New Zealand's appreciation for your work in guiding our GGE and your efforts to move us forward in addressing the challenges posed by Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems.

As New Zealand has highlighted during our engagement in previous sessions of the GGE, our understanding of the human element (and the nature of human-machine interaction) is central to our ability to make progress in our deliberations here. We consider that a focus on these issues provides the most promising way forward, particularly in light of ongoing divergences of view on a definition of LAWS. In our view, it would be productive to discuss which functions of a weapons system are "critical" and must be subject to human control, and which functions could be delegated to other safeguards.

Mr Chair,

New Zealand would like to thank all those delegations that have presented working papers to the GGE, including those that have built on the fruitful discussions we had here in April. In particular, we would like to thank the United Kingdom for its thoughtful paper – WP.1 – which correlates with much of our own thinking on these issues. In particular, it is clear that human control – whether characterised as meaningful, appropriate or otherwise – means different things at different times, and that a human-centric through-life approach is necessary to ensure that control is always at the required level. For example, human control is not limited to physical intervention in the operation of a weapon system. Rather, it can include the development and implementation of appropriate cyber-security, auditable reasoning and other verification systems at various stages of the LAWS process.

In this context New Zealand considers that there would be great value in building an understanding of the current processes that States have in place to ensure human control throughout the life cycle of a weapon system. Such an examination, an outline of which can be seen in Annex I to the UK paper, will help illustrate the extensive protections that States already employ to ensure human control during the development and deployment of weapons systems. More importantly, it will enable us to more easily identify where autonomous weapons systems pose unacceptable challenges for human control, and for compliance with international law including international humanitarian law. With this in mind, Mr Chair, my delegation hopes that future sessions of the GGE will enable a more detailed consideration of these issues.

Finally, Mr Chair, we wish to highlight the inter-connected issues of human control, reliability, predictability and trust. New Zealand agrees with the observation of the ICRC that “predictability and reliability in using an autonomous weapon system are ways of connecting human agency and intent to the eventual consequences of an attack”. We also agree that autonomous

systems raise important questions about predictability given uncertainty as to exactly when, where and why a resulting attack will take place. In this regard, it is clear to my delegation that human control is essential not only to provide assurance that a weapon system complies with all international and domestic legal obligations, but also assurance that it can be trusted. Confirmation of meaningful human control, including confirmation that potential vulnerabilities have been addressed at all stages in the life-cycle of a weapon system, will affect the level of trust that a commander – and, more broadly, society – may have in that system. My delegation intends to return to the issue of trust in our comments later this week, including with respect to the potential use of Article 36 reviews to address some of the challenges posed by LAWS.

Thank you Mr Chair.