

## ICRAC Statement of Definitions of AWS August 10 2021

ICRAC would like to thank the chair for a stimulating paper that has provoked very useful and well-informed discussions over the last few days.

We support the chair's call for a functional definition for autonomous weapons systems.

As we said in our previous statement, we wish to underline our continued support for a functional definition of AWS as weapons which have autonomy in the critical functions of target identification, selection, and the decision to apply force.

This is not something new. In fact the first functional definition of autonomous weapons systems has been in front of us since before the first meeting of the CCW on LAWS. It comes from the United States Department of Defence DoD directive 3000.09, *November 21, 2012* and remained the same after the document was update in 2017.

It states that an autonomous weapon system is a *weapon system that, once activated, can select and engage targets without further intervention by a human operator.*

Over the eight years of the CCW on autonomous weapons systems many statements and reports from states, including most European states, have provided variations on this functional definition.

These are all close to the ICRC's definition that *Autonomous weapon systems select and apply force to targets without human intervention*

We commend the many states that have followed Cuba on fleshing out the functional definition while maintaining its simple nature.

As the great scientist Albert Einstein once said: Keep it as simple as possible, but no simpler.

Mr Chair, by concentrating on the critical functions of target selection and the application of force keeps the focus on the purpose of this Convention *to ban or restrict the use of specific types of weapons that are considered to cause unnecessary or unjustifiable suffering to combatants or to affect civilians indiscriminately.*

That means that the critical functions of target selection and applying violent force should be the issues of concern to this convention. There are a number of ways and means that autonomous functions can be used in weapons systems and in the civilian but it is only these critical functions that cause humanitarian concerns.

Focussing on the critical functions in this way removes any expressed problem with the dual use of technology or artificial intelligence.

Moreover, discussions about different levels of autonomy can be distracting as many of you may remember from the 2015 and 2016 meetings that described more levels of autonomy than the number of professors brought to discuss them. This led us nowhere.

We believe that a version of functional definition described today provides clarity for the CCW to proceed onwards while eliminating many of the distractions that can arise from complexity. This allows for a more detailed discussion of AWS that will lead to clear

discussions at the review conference and will lead to negotiations of international legal instrument that can establish norms of appropriate behaviour and drive operational approaches in a way that allows the retention of meaningful human control and protect our shared humanity.