



**Group of Governmental Experts on  
Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems**

**Agenda item 5(e)**

**27 March 2019**

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Thank you Chair.

In terms of possible options for addressing the challenges posed by LAWS and next steps to be taken by the GGE, New Zealand welcomes the “possible guiding principles” agreed last year, in particular the points that LAWS are subject to international law, including IHL, and the overriding importance of human responsibility. Our intervention yesterday highlighted some of the existing international law that provides a basis for meaningful disciplines over autonomous weaponry, in particular AP1.

Among the outcomes from this Group, New Zealand would like to see clear recognition of the importance of strengthening the operation of Art 36 reviews. We welcome the efforts being made by the ICRC to progress work on sharing best practice methods for conducting reviews and developing states’ understanding of how Art 36 reviews apply to new technologies such as LAWS. This could include a more structured approach to capacity-building for states which seek to conduct Article 36 reviews.

We are also interested in the proposal made by Portugal this week to compile existing international law, as well as the possibility that has been raised of developing a compendium of best practices.

In New Zealand's view, building on the work of this Group and on existing international law, it would also be appropriate for the international community to set out at a high political level its concerns about unrestrained development and use of LAWS and the importance of LAWS remaining within appropriate bounds. This would respond meaningfully to concerns raised both by states, and by civil society, including the AI community.

In this regard, New Zealand welcomes the proposals that have been made for a political declaration on LAWS. In our view, any such declaration should set out key disciplines on the development and use of LAWS such as meaningful human control and the operational safeguards needed to ensure that.

Mr. Chair. in our view, agreement on politically binding principles on LAWS would constitute a major step forward in efforts to respond to the challenge of autonomous weaponry. It would build on existing international law yet also reflect the evolving nature of our understanding of the technologies and issues involved. A political declaration also does not exclude progress on other options over time.

New Zealand believes that a declaration should also provide the high-level mandate for an ongoing process to ensure that the international community's understanding of, and approach to LAWS continues to keep pace with technological and other developments. In addition to technical exchanges, discussions should keep under review the political, security and legal implications of LAWS, and would allow states to continue to discuss issues involved in a possible legal prohibition on fully autonomous weapons.

Such discussions would be an important opportunity to continue the process of transparency and dialogue that has been a feature of this Group, and to build mutual confidence among states on this issue. As such, they should be open to all states and should continue to engage stakeholders including the AI community and NGOs.

Thank you Mr. Chair.

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