



**Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN  
Geneva**

**Statement by Mr. Muhammad Omar, First Secretary at the meeting of Group of  
Governmental Experts (GGE) on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS)  
2 December 2021**

**Mr. Chairman,**

Let me begin by thanking you for your leadership and for your able stewardship of the GGE.

We appreciate the support of the Secretariat in organizing our work and thank France for organizing the retreat in Evian.

We also thank you for your efforts in preparing the draft proposal for the report of the GGE and for sharing it. I take this opportunity to assure you of my delegation's active and constructive engagement.

We agree with you that ambition is something we should strive for. Please allow me to also add that in our view, ambition would best serve us if it were also seen to be approaching all issues related to LAWS in a comprehensive manner and caters to concerns of all parties, including a large majority that continues to believe that a legally binding instrument with appropriate prohibitions, regulations and controls remains the only viable course of action for the future.

**Mr. Chairman,**

We would share our perspective on specific elements in the given draft in due course. In my intervention, I would, however, share some general points, without getting into details of language of the current draft or a possible one that we would eventually adopt.

My first point is regarding the organic nature of our work. This has been highlighted by many including my delegation on a number of occasions. It is important to maintain the integrity and interconnectedness of legal, humanitarian, ethical and security dimensions. Our conclusions and recommendations, also therefore, must be anchored in a similarly

integrated perspective, leading the way to a coherent and organic policy approach in the way forward.

My second point is regarding the structure of the report, which you also briefly touched on, as have others. In our view, the distinction between sections three and four is not clear, nor does it fully correspond to or capture the views that have been expressed on the breadth of issues in our work on LAWS. Moreover, categorizing issues in a manner that sections three and four do, certainly does not promote confidence in the robust and forward-looking outcome that all High Contracting Parties desire. We would support deleting section three in entirety and incorporating all elements, including those that remain missing in a proportionate manner in the report. In this sense, an approach of the 2019 GGE which included sections on conclusions and recommendations, with all items addressed in an equitable manner could be a possible option.

My third point is on keeping a focus of the report on issues directly related to LAWS and those substantive elements that specifically address LAWS in all its dimensions. Having a long list of generic elements that apply to any and all weapon systems in general would neither serve the purpose of this GGE since States have their own perspectives on such matters, nor is an exposition of such elements the purpose of this GGE. Crucially, it runs the risk of diverting focus from actually responding to the urgency of addressing the unique and novel concerns and issues pertaining to LAWS, even more so in the limited time available to us.

The fourth point is on reflecting the fundamental issues regarding LAWS upfront and clearly, paving the way to conclusions and recommendations. We have been in discussion on LAWS for several years now. There is extensive work on what those issues are, even as there may still be difference of views among High Contracting Parties on how to deal with them substantively. A key contribution by the GGE going towards the RevCon would be to place those issues upfront and then include their addressal as part of our conclusions and recommendations, dealing with each substantively. Key issues that require highlighting involve the centrality of human element and human control, the significance of addressing humanitarian and legal concerns, the criticality of alleviating security concerns, including issues of an arms race and lowered thresholds for conflicts, and the importance of the ethical dimension.

**Mr. Chairman,**

My fifth point is regarding balance. Our discussions on various components and elements, from legal to humanitarian, from security concerns to ethical dimension have been elaborated on by various delegations through the course of this GGE and indeed in the past sessions. A number of these important issues and proposals that many delegations including mine have presented have still not found an adequate reflection in the report. Rectifying this would be an important step towards agreements on different issues. Similarly, our report, its conclusions and recommendations need to correspond to all these dimensions accurately, faithfully, and in a balanced manner. This remains the best prospect and a logical approach in our view to garnering agreement.

The sixth point is regarding the need to avoid ascribing priorities to the tools that we have at our disposal as part of our mandate. Our deliberations have been broad, as remains our mandate, which encompasses a host of proposals as well as our previous reports. In this context, picking a few guiding principles, while we continue to have the mandate to develop them further and also have substantive proposals on new ones, while also not replicating the chapeau of the guiding principles, would not be an appropriate method of using them. We should remain mindful that our tools are meant to guide our efforts and do not serve their purpose by mere replication. In the same vein, as has also been pointed out by Ireland, our mandate is not to develop a normative or operational framework at this GGE but to make recommendations. It remains our sincere hope that the report would eventually correspond to this objective requirement.

My seventh point is regarding the direct link of what we agree in recommendations to what we propose as the way forward. In our view, it would only be logical to find an agreement on the recommendations first, before we propose a way forward, since it would depend on what garnered agreement and what remained outstanding. In saying so, I recall that my delegation continues to support a result-oriented outcome with a strengthened mandate for future work, which for us could also include developing a normative and operational framework in the ambit of a legally binding instrument.

Lastly, in our view, any considerations of a political declaration can at best only constitute an interim understanding that shall not constitute a substitute for a legally binding instrument. And quite naturally, the actual contents of any proposed declaration would eventually decide if it were considered a useful option by High Contracting Parties or otherwise. At this point, a solemn declaration by the Review Conference, in line with the 2016 approach, appears a more realistic outcome.

**Mr. Chairman,**

I conclude by re-emphasizing that it remains critical to have a comprehensive approach to our work. Parts of our work cannot be ignored in favour of other parts. An equitable approach to all issues i.e., humanitarian, legal, ethical and security, addressing them in an integrated and comprehensive manner remains the best course.

As my delegation has cautioned previously, this process launched within the CCW can only be sustained if it is result-oriented, is seen to be responding to the concerns of all States and sets in motion limits, regulations, and prohibitions.

**I thank you, Mr. Chairman**