



Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN Geneva

Statement

CCW Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, 21-25 September 2020

Agenda item 5(e): Possible options for addressing the humanitarian and international security challenges posed by emerging technologies in the area of LAWS in the context of the objectives and purposes of the Convention without prejudging policy outcomes and taking into account past, present and future proposals (24 September 2020)

Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by commending your efforts in organizing our work and your skilful chairmanship of the GGE this week.

Although many delegations, including mine, called for a more ambitious mandate for the GGE last year, we have ultimately been tasked to develop options for addressing the humanitarian and international security challenges posed by LAWS, and submit consensus recommendations in relation to the clarification, consideration and development of aspects of the normative and operational framework on LAWS.

Our deliberations through the week, building on previous discussions, again highlighted the key considerations which continue to underpin our work. In our view, these include:

- Recognition of LAWS as a unique and novel class of weapons with multi-faceted concerns, especially in relation to the humanitarian and security dimension, requiring multilateral addressal through international regulations.

- The inability of autonomous machines to be programmed to ensure full compliance with IHL. And even if the opposite were true, a complete lack of clarity on the necessary means and measures.
- Importance of ascertaining the scope and extent of human control necessary to satisfy all concerns related to the humanitarian, security and ethical dimensions of LAWS.
- Arriving at a simple working definition of LAWS, without prejudice to the regulatory response, through a technical and policy-neutral approach.
- Adequately addressing the serious implications of LAWS for regional and global security.

Naturally, the options that the GGE considers for addressing the humanitarian and international security challenges posed by LAWS must be in consonance with these considerations and satisfactorily respond to addressing these challenges.

Mr. Chairman,

This week, we again observed a large majority of States, including my own, expressing the strong desire to pursue a legally binding instrument stipulating prohibitions and regulations on LAWS. This clearly remains as the strongest and most favoured option and in our view the most responsive to the considerations I highlighted earlier.

We note that other opinions have also been voiced, such as exploring the possibility of non-legally binding and Transparency and Confidence Building Measures (TCBMs). In our view, while these have their value, they can only be an interim step towards a legally-binding instrument, as they remain insufficient in adequately addressing the multi-faceted challenges posed by LAWS.

Mr. Chairman,

States Parties have attained a sufficient degree of common understanding on the various aspects of LAWS. Our discussions this week refined them further and again spotlighted the key considerations for developing robust recommendations on a normative framework for LAWS. We should remember that our GGE is a result-oriented process and must demonstrate it, while heeding the concerns of all member states.

To our mind, there is a sufficient degree of understanding on the topic, if we are true to our purpose, to move towards the development of concrete policy recommendations as the final product of the GGE to the 2021 Review Conference. My delegation will engage with that process in a constructive and cooperative manner in order to arrive at a robust report by consensus.

Mr. Chairman,

In our view, the further development and use of LAWS must ideally be pre-emptively banned through a dedicated Protocol of the CCW. Pending the negotiation and conclusion of such a legally binding Protocol, a process we hope the Review Conference endorses; the states currently developing such weapons should place a moratorium on their production. It must be ensured that LAWS do not outpace the evolution of regulations governing them.

At the same time, States that are believed to be actively researching and developing such weapons prefer to do nothing at this stage, almost negating the vociferous concerns related to LAWS. In our view, doing nothing while weapon systems with Artificial Intelligence and increasingly autonomous functions are fast becoming a reality should not be an option.

Mr. Chairman,

Each passing session of the GGE sees the concerns surrounding LAWS exacerbate and become more pronounced. Despite attempts by the technology holders to point out the virtues of doing nothing at this stage, the international community at large is not ready to sit idle. The consequences, especially on international peace and security, are too grave to be ignored. We, therefore, support the renewal of the GGE with the mandate to negotiate a new Protocol to the CCW dealing specifically with LAWS.

I thank you, Mr. Chairperson.