



**Remarks of High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu at the Second  
Formal Meeting of the Group of Government Experts (GGE) on  
Emerging Technologies in Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems  
(LAWS)**

(Delivered by the Director of the Geneva Branch of the United Nations Office for  
Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Anja Kaspersen)



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His Excellency, Ambassador Amandeep Singh Gill,

Excellences,  
Distinguished delegates  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs to the second formal meeting of the group of governmental experts (GGE) on emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems. I would like to congratulate Ambassador Amandeep Singh Gill on assuming his second term as Chair of the GGE. I commend his commitment to facilitating substantive discussions and for seeking diverse participation in the important work of this group.

The world is in the midst a boom in scientific and technological development. These emerging capabilities have implications for all aspects of modern life, including how we work and the overall security environment. They are beginning to revolutionize manufacturing, transport, healthcare and other sectors, and over time will provide significant benefits for people everywhere.

However, as Secretary-General Guterres has said, “Together with these clear benefits, there are also clear risks. Advances in technology are giving rise very quickly to new methods and means of warfare, with potentially undesirable or unclear consequences.”

Last year’s meeting of the GGE demonstrated the importance of the CCW as a platform for addressing some of these challenges related to emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems. One of the attributes of the CCW process is its attempt to balance between humanitarian and military considerations. The 2017 meeting provided High Contracting Parties with the opportunity to comprehensively engage, in a formal setting, with the many dimensions of this issue. It moreover allowed States to benefit from interaction with a wide array of experts from outside governments, including from academia, the private sector, industry leaders and civil society. These actors have played an important role in bringing attention and momentum to the issues to be addressed by the GGE this week

While this inclusive and open approach should continue, as this process matures it is imperative that High Contracting Parties focus on building shared understandings, identifying common ground and narrowing-in on areas of convergence, with a view to making real progress.

As demonstrated by your ability to agree to a set of substantive conclusions and recommendations last year, there are already areas of convergence that are readily apparent. International humanitarian law applies to all weapon systems. Responsibility for the deployment of any weapon system remains with States. States must ensure accountability in accordance with applicable international law for the use of force in conflict. These tenets should not be controversial but nonetheless bear repeating.

Beyond outlining important areas of agreement, your agreed conclusions and recommendations of 2017 also pointed to areas that demand further focused consideration, and I am glad to see this reflected in your programme of work for this session.

Under the first item of your agenda, you will seek to promote a common understanding of concepts and characteristics of emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapon systems. Given the cutting-edge nature of the relevant technologies, this is undoubtedly important. It is, of course, not the task or within the competencies of this body to arrive at definitive technical definitions of emerging technologies. However, defining the scope of your discussions and the broad characteristics of these technologies and capabilities relevant to the Convention will be important to allow discussions to move forward.

In this connection, your second agenda item, considering the human element in the use of lethal force, including human-machine interaction, is instructive. Without prejudicing policy outcomes, it will be important to recognize the degree and nature of human intervention in the context of the critical functions of weapons systems, and draw on examples from other sectors and disciplines.

It is my belief therefore that it is the responsibility of this group to examine and build consensus on common understandings on possible limits on the degree of autonomy in the use of lethal force.

Which brings me to your third agenda item, possible options for addressing the various challenges posed by emerging technologies in the era of autonomous weapons systems. I know you already have some concrete policy options on the table. I am encouraged by the enthusiasm to engage on this important issue and look forward what I hope will be a sustained critical interaction on the entire spectrum of possible options, with a view on taking this important work forward in an effective and coordinated fashion.

As I have said previously, it is vital that normative considerations across all sectors of our societies, keep pace with technological developments, to safeguard our shared values, norms and laws. In this regard, I would note the importance of recognizing the interdisciplinary and intergenerational nature of the technologies and trends you are discussing, and their long term and wide-ranging impact. I encourage you to consider how to facilitate greater involvement by youth in your deliberations.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The challenges raised by fundamentally new types of and the convergence of technologies increasingly impact on many, if not all, aspects of our work across disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. It is vital, therefore, that we keep the dialogue inclusive and transparent, while demonstrating our ability to meet and respond to the complex challenges posed by novel technological developments. I stand ready to work with you all in this important endeavour.

I wish you a successful and productive meeting.

Thank you.