



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

**Statement by Ambassador Khalil Hashmi, Permanent Representative of
Pakistan, at the Plenary Meeting of Conference on Disarmament, Geneva
08 September 2020**

Mr. President,

Thank you for convening this plenary meeting. I congratulate you on assuming the presidency of this Conference and extend a warm welcome to the Ambassador of Belgium.

My delegation assures you of our support and constructive engagement as we finalize the report under your able stewardship. We also thank the Secretariat for its efforts in facilitating the organization of our work.

I take this opportunity to also commend the work done by all six CD Presidents this year, notwithstanding the unforeseen constraints imposed by COVID-19.

I wish to also congratulate you on organizing this year's first and likely the only thematic debate on a topic which is both very important and timely. I wish to also thank the distinguished panellists for their presentations and valuable contributions.

Mr. President,

Technology, as we know, is a function of innovation. Together, the two have driven and propelled humanity forward in all spheres, including armaments. Yet, what distinguishes the 21st century from perhaps all previous eras, and this has been noted by the distinguished panel, is the sheer pace in developments and emergence of new technologies, including from an arms control perspective.

This heightened pace of technological innovations has and continues to change the way international law can and should govern the development, deployment and use of these weapons. Even as the pace of development and use of new weapons technologies remains inevitable, it is essential to develop commensurate norms, laws and rules to regulate them in all their dimensions.

The way some of these new and emerging technologies are being used has a direct bearing and implications for international peace and security, at all levels. It is not surprising, therefore, that this cluster of issues, under agenda items 5, 6 & 7 of the CD, has assumed high significance over the past years, and is indeed emerging as the fifth core issue in the CD.

Mr. President,

We continue to witness an innovation overflow for various categories of new technologies and means of arms, outpacing requisite regulations and controls. Even as we grapple with questions surrounding new domains of war fighting such as cyber and electromagnetic spectrum, added layers of complexity arise due to the integration of technology to traditional domains, whether at land, air, sea or space.

As a further enabler, technology has integrated all domains from a degree to another, making war fighting a cross-domain construct. Our arms control and disarmament solutions can also no longer remain oblivious to such developments or remain stuck in old binaries – they no longer provide all the answers.

This is not to undermine the importance of crucial existing arms control and disarmament agreements, but to acknowledge the increasing insufficiency. This growing gap – between innovation, integration and regulation – creates and accentuates vulnerabilities and drivers of tensions for states, generating an increasingly destabilizing vacuum.

Mr. President,

While we justifiably focus on the impact of weapons of mass destruction on international security, especially nuclear weapons, it is important to recognize that the collective impact of and serious threats to peace, security and stability at the regional and global levels by such developments are comparable to any other category of weapons of mass destruction.

Such threats are even more urgent and real because these new weapons reduce or eliminate the danger of human casualties for the user states and, therefore, increase the propensity for their use and therefore increase the propensity of their use and the enhanced prospects of symmetric

and asymmetric responses. The net result is lowering of the threshold for resort to armed conflict.

Mr. President,

Within this larger edifice of new and emerging technologies, I would draw attention to three particular issues that merit an earnest discussion and consideration by the CD, namely cyber weapons; Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS); and the issue of chemical and biological terrorism.

Cyber space has emerged as one of the key new domains of warfare. The ability to act anonymously, without traditional geographical limitations, at a very low risk to human life, coupled with the ability to mass produce cyber weapons cheaply, makes them extremely attractive and yet dangerous.

The Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have a unique attribute of being neither inherently civil nor military in nature, with purposes to which they are put and motives of the user defining their impact. Several States have or are developing ICTs as instruments of warfare and intelligence operations, and for political purposes. Compounded by the absence of common understandings on acceptable State behaviour with regard to use of cyber space, this greatly increases the risks to international peace and security.

The spread of sophisticated malicious tools and techniques by States or non-State actors further increases the risk of mistaken attribution and unintended escalation. The varying degree of cyber capacity among different States increases the vulnerability of the global network. As disruptive activities using cyber weapons grow more complex and risky, it is obvious that no State is able to address these threats alone. A multilateral response including international cooperation and assistance is therefore essential to reduce risks and secure the cyber space.

Mr. President,

The application of norms derived from existing international law relevant to the use of ICTs by States is an essential measure to reduce risks to international peace, security and stability. However, a common understanding on how such norms shall apply to State behaviour and the use of ICTs by States is a complex and long-term task, requiring further work. Given the unique attributes of ICTs, additional norms should be developed over time.

The applicability of international law, in particular the Charter of the United Nations, remains essential to maintaining peace and stability and promoting an open, secure, peaceful and accessible ICT environment. However, given the unique differences between the physical and cyber spheres, the extent, scope and nature of applicability as well as interpretation of international law in the State conduct and use of ICT requires further careful consideration.

All of these issues need to be comprehensively addressed in a multilateral setting to develop norms and treaties governing the use of ICTs and cyber space. Four Groups of Governmental Experts (GGE) have examined, with varying degrees of success, the existing and potential threats from the cyber-sphere and possible cooperative measures to address them, while the outcomes of the fifth remain unclear. Also, the integration of ICTs to other traditional domains, such as space, ground and air, brings in further complexities which require a wholesome and comprehensive deliberation. In our view, the issue is ripe for consideration. The Conference on Disarmament is an appropriate venue for such multilateral work on cyber security.

Mr. President,

A significant number of states have rightly described Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems or LAWS as the next revolution in military affairs; fundamentally changing the nature of war. The absence of human intervention will make wars more inhumane. Regardless of the level of sophistication and programming, machines cannot and will not replace humans in making the vital decisions about the means and methods of inflicting injuries or causing death.

There is universal agreement that such weapons must comply with International Law, including International Humanitarian Law. Yet, we have yet to determine whether autonomous machines are capable of being programmed to ensure such compliance. And if so, what are the means and measures necessary for doing so.

Similarly, human control and responsibility on the use of weapons with autonomous functions has been deemed as essential. Yet the scope and extent of such control that would satisfy all concerns related to the humanitarian, security and ethical dimensions of LAWS is still to be ascertained.

Mr. President,

The issue of LAWS does not only have legal, ethical and humanitarian dimensions, but also carries serious implications for regional and global peace and security. Their introduction will significantly lower the threshold of going to war; consequently, the resort to use of force will become a more frequent phenomenon. *LAWS could also be used in anonymous and clandestine operations as well as for targeted killings including in the territory of other states.*

LAWS would, therefore, undermine peace and security at regional, sub-regional and global levels. Their introduction would also affect progress on disarmament and non-proliferation. Faced with the prospect of being overwhelmed by

LAWS, states possessing WMD capabilities would be reluctant to give them up, while others would feel encouraged to acquire them.

As a unique and novel class of weapons that has given rise to multifaceted concerns, this category of weapons needs to be addressed multilaterally. National regulations and responses are useful but not sufficient. International regulations are needed, including for adequately addressing the serious security dimensions. Besides considering the issue of LAWS in the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), its international security related dimensions should be comprehensively addressed by the CD.

Mr. President,

The Conventions prohibiting Biological and Chemical Weapons, the BWC and the CWC, are two important pillars of the international security architecture. They have made significant contributions to the goal of general and complete disarmament by comprehensively outlawing two entire categories of WMDs.

We value the contributions by both conventions to global security and their potential for promoting international cooperation in peaceful uses within their respective areas. However, significant gaps exist, which are being further accentuated with the emergence of new technologies.

For the BWC, the questions generated by the lack of a dedicated verification mechanism are only going to be compounded with continued advances in technology, including those related to synthetic biology and nano-bio materials and interactions.

It is well known that chemical and biological materials are relatively more easily available and therefore there are greater risks of these being acquired, developed and used by non-state actors. While nuclear terrorism is already covered under existing international instruments, a Convention dealing with terrorist acts involving chemical and biological materials will be a positive development on the international security and counter-terrorism landscape.

At the same time, ssensitive technologies and materials must be adequately controlled to ensure their use for peaceful purposes alone. However, this objective cannot justify restrictions, practices and cartels which hinder trade in chemicals, equipment and technology for demonstrably peaceful purposes or exchanges of new discoveries in biosciences from promoting legitimate scientific inquiry and economic activities.

We support the commencement of substantive work in the CD on elaborating an international convention on the suppression of acts of

chemical and biological terrorism, whether in the form of discussions or negotiations.

Mr. President,

There is demonstrable value in addressing the threat of chemical and biological terrorism through further normative development that plugs these gaps in the existing international legal regime. The WMD related dimensions of terrorism adds urgency to such work.

Substantive work on this issue in the CD will also have the salutary effect of revitalising the Conference by breaking its oft lamented deadlock. As a proposal that does not negatively affect the vital security interests of any Member State, it would avoid the issue arising from the competing priorities amongst the CD's so-called other four core issues.

Mr. President,

While nuclear disarmament remains the raison d'être of this body, the agenda items under focus today are equally important and perhaps even more urgent to counter threats posed to international peace and security, with the growing gap between the legal regime and the evolving nature of biology and chemistry.

The CD has all the requisite tools under these agenda items to address a number of these urgent contemporary international security issues. It cannot remain oblivious to these developments and must deliberate and prepare grounds to tackle them in a manner to provide enhanced security for all states.

I thank you.