



**Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations
Geneva**

**Remarks by Ambassador Zaman Mehdi, Deputy Permanent
Representative of Pakistan at the meeting of Group of Governmental
Experts (GGE) on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS)
15 May 2023**

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to appreciate your steering of this GGE and for circulating the zero draft of the report, which in our view constitutes a good basis for our work during this week.

The importance of our work this week cannot be understated.

We have been discussing legal, humanitarian, technical and security aspects of lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS) for over a decade. Ten years on, there is a reasonable level of understanding, varying degree of convergence and a growing sense of urgency among the High Contracting Parties.

We have moved forward in this last decade, but we have not moved enough. Technology has outpaced our work to develop a legal and a normative framework.

Just this morning the UN Secretary General has called lethal autonomous weapon systems “unacceptable and morally repugnant”. He

has renewed his call to the countries to agree on a prohibition on their development, deployment and use.

We believe that this is an important year for the GGE process. The future of this process is closely tied with two factors:

- First, our ability to produce results in fulfilment of our mandate. This means making progress that will help demonstrate that CCW continues to be an appropriate framework for developing a normative framework on LAWS,
- Second, the High Contracting Parties being able to deliberate all dimensions of LAWS in the GGE that they are concerned about and not just one narrow aspect of IHL.

Mr. Chairman,

During the course of our discussions, we have witnessed a broad support for a two-tier approach containing prohibitions and regulations. Such an approach is also consistent with the CCW itself and our mandate, that is governed by the purposes and objectives of the CCW.

We note that the draft report attempts to encapsulate this approach in its paragraphs 20 and 21.

However, we strongly believe that prohibitions and regulations should not be approached only from the narrow lens of IHL. Other tenets of international law, ethical imperatives and security aspects should also inform our proposed measures in the two-tier approach. This has been our collective and shared understanding that underpins and guides our work.

In addition, at the very least, we must be able to reiterate our past agreements and build on them. Prohibitions and regulations should be clear and leave no gap. All threshold¹ requirements should fall in the prohibitions category. We have suggested some amendments in the draft report to that end.

¹ Benchmarks which cannot be met during the development, deployment and use of LAWS.

We must also be careful to avoid introducing caveats in the text through which we run the risk of weakening the existing obligations of IHL.

Our delegation remains firmly opposed to any efforts to project LAWS as “acceptable weapons” or to “normalise” their development and use without any legal framework, which would be inconsistent with the letter and spirit of this convention, as well as the larger imperatives of pursuing arms control and disarmament.

And these are the fundamental principles and the motivation behind our proposals to have specific measures to ensure that no weapons system that contravenes the letter or spirit of IHL or its principles is given the proverbial green light.

Mr. Chairman,

In our discussions, we have also heard several delegates point out the international security challenges of LAWS including in the group statement of NAM. Addressing security aspects is closely tied to our mandate. These issues are also part of previous consensus reports of the GGE and embedded in the very objectives and purposes of our work. There is a need to capture this dimension in our report, which is currently missing.

Mitigating risks from a humanitarian perspective is well placed. However, they alone cannot be a substitute to recommendations on addressing the security dimension.

Mr. Chairman,

We look forward to participating constructively during the course of our work this week under your able stewardship to facilitate reaching consensus on this important subject.

I thank you.