



2021 Informal Exchange of Views on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems

Statement by New Zealand

29 June 2021

Thank you Ambassador Pecsteen.

We are delighted to see such a **strong response** to your call for written comments on recommendations in relation to a normative and operational framework on emerging technologies in the area of LAWS. To receive so many submissions from a diverse range of states and groups is a really positive indication of the CCW community's engagement in – and desire for progress on – this important issue.

For our part, New Zealand was pleased to once again make a **joint submission** together with Austria, Brazil, Chile, Ireland, Luxembourg and Mexico, presenting the relevant elements of our joint commentary from September last year.

Nationally, in the last two months, New Zealand has begun a significant work programme to develop a more comprehensive **domestic policy** on autonomous weapons systems. In April, we held a workshop which brought together academics, activists, officials, Defence personnel and entrepreneurs, which was extremely useful in demonstrating the breadth of the challenges posed by autonomous weapons and in highlighting the many factors regulation of such systems needs to take into account. Since then, our Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control and domestic policy team have hosted and participated in a range of meetings on the issue around the country, as well as virtual meetings with international experts, to ensure we are engaging with the broadest possible range of stakeholders and partners, and taking into account all relevant issues and factors. We look forward to providing an update on the outcome of this domestic process in due course and are happy to engage directly with any delegations who are interested in our approach.

In the meantime, we welcome the **ICRC's recent policy announcement** on this issue. While I cannot prejudge New Zealand's formal response while our domestic policy process is ongoing, the ICRC's analysis certainly seems to provide a clear case to support the prohibition of the most egregious kinds of autonomous weapons systems, and to negotiate regulations on the rest of these systems. When the ICRC – the guardians of IHL – say we

need a new international instrument, this should be an important consideration in the approach taken by the GGE.

We are also sympathetic to the widespread calls for updating the GGE's **mandate**. It would be fitting if we could agree on a new mandate for the GGE which reflects that some progress has been made in the past five years, and which directs us forward towards more intensive and focused negotiations.

We commend Belgium on convening these informal consultations and sincerely hope that the **August GGE** will be able to proceed as planned. Our informal discussions this week have underscored the urgency with which states must now work to address the challenges posed by autonomous weapons systems. New Zealand stands ready to play our part.

Thank you.

NZ disarmament statements online, www.converge.org.nz/pma/nzdist.htm