

Statement by Sweden at the CCW GGE on Lethal Autonomous Weapons (LAWS),  
Geneva 21-25 September 2020

Mr Chairman,

As it is the first time that I take the floor, let me begin by congratulating you on the appointment as Chair. Sweden promises to lend you its full support and cooperation.

Sweden stands fully behind the statements made by the European Union and wishes to make some additional points from a national perspective on guiding principle (c) – human machine interaction.

Mr Chairman,

Sweden continues to consider the CCW as the appropriate forum to respond to the developments in the field of weapons technology. Despite the challenges faced by delegations as a result of the ongoing Covid19-pandemic, we are pleased that this meeting of the GGE was able to proceed as scheduled. We would like to thank delegations for their flexibility in this regard.

Sweden would also like to thank Ambassador Karklins for his efforts in guiding the work of the GGE and for the excellent work done concerning the Guiding Principles and the Commonalities-paper. We believe that the paper will serve as a good basis for continued work, allowing us to make further progress within the GGE.

Mr. Chairman,

International Humanitarian Law applies fully to all weapons system, including the potential development and use of lethal autonomous weapons system. This is a fundamental principle. Accountability for use of force cannot be transferred to machines. Thus, human responsibility for decisions on the use of weapons systems must be retained. Preserving human control over the use of force is a key objective and measures to ensure that human control is maintained should be considered throughout the entire life cycle of a weapons system.

It is essential that military decision makers and operators fully understand the weapons systems at their command and have the necessary tools at their disposal to perform their duties correctly. Weapon systems need to be sufficiently predictable and reliable allowing for the operators to be certain that the systems will function in accordance with the intention of the operator. It is essential that any complex system has rigorous handling regulations, including manuals, procedures of use and

methods for training. These must all form part of the essential toolbox required for human-machine interaction and for lethal autonomous weapon systems to be used in compliance International Law. Furthermore, legal advisors specialized in international law can play a valuable advisory role in military decision-making related to the interpretation and application of International Humanitarian Law.

Mr Chairman,

Weapons systems vary greatly depending on their characteristics, operational context, target and spatial and temporal limits. As such, the level of human-machine interaction may also vary greatly, and its limits must be taken into account. The specific measures required for human control will thus need to be context dependant and assessed on a case-by-case basis.

The more precise requirements of what constitutes human control in various contexts need to be analysed and understood in practical term. How we ensure that humans continue to play the necessary role in decisions to use force, regardless of the sophistication of the technology, needs to be studied further.

In this regard, Sweden welcomes all efforts, particularly those made by ICRC and SIPRI, in identifying the practical elements of human control and assessing how these can be operationalized or implemented, based on legal, ethical and operational requirements and considerations. The ICRC/SIPRI report raises a series of interesting questions and observations while also putting forward a number of recommendations. We look forward to the continued work and research in this area as it will allow for greater knowledge and insight into the complex questions surrounding the potential use of weapons systems based on emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons.

I thank you.