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Permanent Representative of the Delegation of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament  
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Agenda 5(d) Review of potential military applications of related technologies in the context of the Group’s work  
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Preventing superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering and indiscriminate attacks in armed conflicts is one of the main objectives of international humanitarian law. Mitigating the impacts of armed conflict on civilians and combatants will help promote the purpose of the CCW.

Artificial intelligence, machine learning, and other technologies with autonomous functions have significant potentials for civilian use. They can contribute to saving human life and to improving quality of life. Similarly, the military use of such technology deserves serious consideration as it also has the potential to help protect civilians and save human lives.

For example, if, in the future, more sophisticated computer software enables commanders to assess the presence of civilians and civilian objects on the battlefield with greater accuracy, this may lead to a better prediction of possible collateral damages to be eventually caused by military actions. And if the assessments of possible consequences of military action is conducted by means of a future technology with higher sophistication, greater quantity of information can be processed in a shorter span of time than currently possible, this would further reduce the risk of civilian casualties.

In order to ensure that the military use of emerging technologies in the area of LAWS is in compliance with international legal obligations, particularly international humanitarian law, we must carefully study the use in the entire life cycle of weapons systems. In particular, the hardware and software within the design, development, and testing stages, should be rigorously tested, evaluated, and verified under various pragmatic situations, and the possible risk of them should be carefully explored, together with corresponding mitigation measures. It is important to improve the predictability and reliability of such weapons systems through the process I have just mentioned.

By making sure to carry out such testing, evaluating and verification of autonomous weapons systems within realistic situation before their deployment, we can prevent unintended attacks resulting from system malfunctions, machine errors, etc. This would certainly contribute to the reduction of risk of inflicting harm on civilians and civilian objects.