

CCW Meeting of High Contracting Parties

Statement by Ireland

Ms. Jackie O'Halloran Bernstein

Deputy Director for Disarmament and Non Proliferation,

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

14 November 2014

Mr. Chair,

As this is the first time that my delegation takes the floor, I would like to congratulate you on your election and to assure you of our full support for you in your task.

Ireland fully aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the European Union and would like to add some points in a national capacity.

The mandate of the CCW and its Protocols is to regulate or ban the use of specific categories of conventional weapons that have effects which trouble the conscience of humanity. The drafters of the 1977 Geneva Convention recognized that constant evolution and technological progress would require also a constant responsibility to ensure that new weapons, means and methods of warfare are not in violation of relevant international law, including international humanitarian law.

Ireland considers that the four day meeting of experts last May provided an important opportunity to explore the fundamental legal, ethical and societal issues raised by one such possible technological advancement – lethal autonomous weapons systems. We would like to thank France for its chairing of that group.

The debate on LAWS reaches far beyond legal and technical complexities, raising fundamental questions about the role of humans in taking lethal decisions in armed combat. The decisive question may very well be whether such weapons are acceptable under the principles of humanity and, if so, under what conditions. We consider the concept of meaningful human control to be essential in this regard and an area which requires further and deeper consideration.

We fully support the holding of a further meeting of experts in 2015 which will allow us to deepen our consideration of these significant questions. In light of the range and complexity of issues raised at our meeting earlier this year, it is our view that a five day meeting, with documentation, would be merited.

Mr. Chair,

Ireland also has concerns regarding the potential use of LAWS in situations beyond the scope of the CCW mandate, including in law enforcement situations. It is for this reason that we also see value in discussing this question in other relevant fora, in particular in the Human Rights Council, as the issue of autonomy is one which has implications not only for International Humanitarian Law but also for International Human Rights Law.

Mr. Chair,

As so ably demonstrated both at our meeting of experts last May but also throughout the life of our Convention and its Protocols, the contribution of civil society and academia to informing and assisting delegations is irreplaceable. Ireland supports a broad and inclusive participation and partnership with civil society in our work.

ENDS