



**Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the
Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons**

Statement, New Zealand Mission to Geneva

16 November, 2022

Mr Chair

Please accept my delegation's well wishes and be assured you can rely on Aotearoa New Zealand for our support in your task.

In view of the work we have ahead of us at this brief Meeting, I will also be brief. New Zealand sees it as critical this week that we show to the world a direction of travel toward a tangible, meaningful collective response to the risks and challenges posed by emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons (or LAWS). We need to give tangible effect to the concept of "intensifying" our work—as recommended in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on LAWS adopted in July this year.

In many respects, July's GGE report is the latest in a string of disappointing outcomes on LAWS in this forum. The mandate that CCW High Contracting Parties agreed for 2022 LAWS GGE work lacked the ambition we—and, let's face it, many others here—wanted to see in order to achieve international, legally binding rules and limits on autonomous weapon systems. Nevertheless, we have worked constructively and flexibly within the GGE to try to achieve greater understanding of the issues and convergence around key concepts and alternatives. Our contribution included sponsoring a UNIDIR workshop on autonomous weapons on 30 May this year with Switzerland.

The GGE faced major procedural obstacles in 2022 and was prevented from fully capturing progress made in its report, largely due to the actions of one country. It does not change our view that substantive progress was made.

We reiterate our support to the GGE Chair. In our view, it is essential that our Meeting this week achieve a credible mandate for 2023 GGE work on autonomous weapons. To that end, this Meeting should allocate a number of GGE days commensurate with the importance and increasing urgency of prohibiting LAWS whose effects cannot be anticipated or controlled, and regulating others in a manner ensuring the human element is retained over decisions about whether and how force is used in conflict.

That this GGE is moving so slowly must look strange in the eyes of the outside world, and to the representatives of civil society sitting at the back of this room. In the world outside, wars are happening. Weapons both new and old are being used. And people are targeted with those weapons and often die, as we can see so tragically in the wake of Russia's illegal invasion and occupation of Ukraine.

In the world outside, problems that we might think are far away—in space or in time—are often actually nearer our doorsteps than we might imagine. This uncomfortable reality contributes to the sense of urgency New Zealand feels in achieving progress this year toward progress on autonomous weapon systems. This sense of urgency was also shared by the 70 states that signed on to the joint statement on autonomous weapons, delivered at the UN General Assembly First Committee in October.

This recognition also underpins our conviction that the CCW must respond credibly to existing means and methods of warfare as well as novel ones. Last year, New Zealand was one of many voices calling for the CCW to consider the implementation and universalisation of CCW Protocol III on Incendiary Weapons. New instances of use of incendiary weapons in conflict this year, as reported by Human Rights Watch and other organisations, have added to our consternation that last year's CCW Review Conference was not able to agree to do that.

CCW High Contracting Parties have a responsibility to take action. To this end, New Zealand adds its voice to the call on you, Mr. Chair, to include in the final report of this meeting a decision that requests the incoming President to conduct informal consultations during the intersessional period on the implementation and universalisation of Protocol III and to report, in their own capacity, to the 2023 Meeting of High Contracting Parties.

I thank you.