



**Statement by PAX
Delivered by Frank Slijper,
Meeting of High Contracting Parties to the CCW,
General Exchange of Views,
Geneva, 13 November 2019**

Thank you Chair,

PAX works on humanitarian disarmament to prevent the unacceptable humanitarian harm caused by certain weapons. We focus on the whole chain of armed conflict, from the development of new weapons, the financing of weapon production, the arms trade to the use of these weapons. We do so in order to better protect civilians and their environment from the effects of certain weapons. It is in this light that I would like to make the following two remarks, on incendiary weapons and on lethal autonomous weapons.

Incendiary weapons

As an organisation that has worked with partners in Syria for over 15 years, we are gravely concerned by, and strongly condemn the ongoing use of incendiary weapons in Syria. Our partners in Syria have witnessed the terrible humanitarian impact of these weapons and fear their continued use.

Protocol III prohibits some but not all incendiary weapons. The protocol's exception for ground-delivered models, as well as multi-purpose munitions, allows for the continuation of the horrific effects that the protocol was designed to prevent. The ongoing use, and the inhumane impact these weapons have should spur concrete action to strengthen and extend the protocol and to increase the stigma on incendiary weapons.

In order to better protect civilians from these weapons, states must dedicate time to discuss Protocol III in 2020, and prepare for more concrete action at the Review Conference in 2021.

Lethal autonomous weapons

Regarding the issue of lethal autonomous weapon systems, we would like to refer to research we have published this week, which shows that the development of such weapons is entering a new phase where the human is gradually disappearing from the decision-making loop.

In particular we see certain types of drones, especially loitering munitions being modified with the latest artificial intelligence technologies such as facial and other recognition technologies, to enable these weapons to select and attack targets with no apparent need for a human to act after the launch of these so-called kamikaze drones.

While our research shows that a handful of arms producing companies have made policies to prevent the development and production of weapons without meaningful human control, most clearly have not.

We find this a deeply concerning development, especially in the absence of a clear and legally binding multilateral framework ensuring meaningful human control over attacks is required at all times.

To prevent the world from an all-out arms race, where states with significant arms industries compete to dominate this new revolution in military technology, a heavy obligation rests on the CCW to show leadership and to prevent this AI arms race from further escalation.

We believe that a clear majority of states see human control over the use of force as the central element of the debate.

Another report that we release this week analyses European statements made at the CCW in 2019 shows further convergence of their views on the need to retain meaningful human control.

We therefore especially appeal to European leaders to show that you can translate such widely shared views on meaningful human control into concrete action.

Also outside of the CCW we see a clear majority demanding new international law. A new opinion poll in ten European countries released today shows an average 73% supporting a prohibition on lethal autonomous weapons.

We therefore continue to be very concerned that a small number of states is blocking steps to translate such broadly shared views into necessary action. Further delays will jeopardise international peace and security with potentially disastrous human consequences.

PAX remains of the view that an international norm, which ensures meaningful human control over the critical functions of weapon systems, is urgently needed. Only a legally binding instrument would adequately address all the ethical and security concerns related to autonomous weapons.

Thank you.