



**Statement by PAX,
Delivered by Miriam Struyk, Program Director for Security and Disarmament,
Convention on Conventional Weapons Meeting of High Contracting Parties,
Geneva, 12 November 2015**

Dear Chairperson,

Thank you, on behalf of my organisation PAX, I would like to say a few words on an old problem and a new one, both within your realm and both in need of concrete action.

First, the older one: **incendiary weapons**. Weapons that burn with effects so horrific that it is almost unbearable to imagine the impact, let alone to hear a victim give a testimony or to imagine that one day you or your loved ones might be under threat of this weapon. Often the general public believes the use of such weapons is already forbidden, but yet they are not. On the contrary, as Human Rights Watch has documented in recent years incendiary weapons have repeatedly been used in several states, including Syria and Ukraine, while there have been allegations of use in Libya and Yemen. The use of these exceptionally cruel weapons should be condemned by all states. We urge CCW state parties to set aside time next year to discuss Protocol III on Incendiary Weapons with a view to pursuing more concrete action (ideally negotiations) at the Review Conference next year. The purpose of the CCW is to address weapons “Deemed to Be **Excessively Injurious** or to Have **Indiscriminate Effects**”. It is hard to justify why incendiary weapons should not be prohibited under this heading.

The newer issue where PAX would like to see the CCW move from norm-building into norm-setting is **killer robots or lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS)**. PAX co-founded the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots due to a range of legal, security and operational concerns but first and foremost because of ethical concerns. Ethical considerations are a starting point as well as our overarching chapeau and legal, operational or strategic considerations on autonomous weapons can and should always be seen in conjunction with ethics and morality. Because in the end if you discuss weapons that once activated select and attack targets without meaningful control, human dignity is at stake. Dignity of the military, civilians and the people in whose name they will be used

We are glad that to see that, next to NGO's, a wide range of actors have concerns: Nobel peace laureates, faith leaders, youth, military veterans, International Committee of the Red Cross and scientists. On the later, as you may recall, this summer more than 3,000 scientists, including leading roboticist and artificial intelligence experts called for a ban on autonomous weapons in an open letter of the Future of Life Institute. One does not often see scientists call for limits to regulate their own field of expertise.

Over the past two years we have heard some say that the matter of autonomous weapons is complex and lacks clear definitions. Our campaign therefore calls not only for international action, but also for national measures to work through these and other challenges. In the Netherlands, we were pleased that the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence asked an independent commission to look in into this issue. Their report was issued two weeks ago under the title: *“Autonomous Weapons: The Necessity of Meaningful Human Control.”* The government will respond to this report and its recommendations within the next three months.

At PAX we have taken a very critical stance on some of this report’s findings, while acknowledging its positive elements and recommendations. Yet despite criticizing certain findings of the report, we welcome the initiative that produced it and the fact that our government requested it. We now expect to have a structured and constructive debate within both the political and public sphere in the Netherlands. We urge other states to consider undertaking similar initiatives to get more clarity on this issue and establish national policy on autonomous weapons. We need a forward-looking precautionary approach on the emerging technology of autonomous weapons.

We therefore believe the next step for the CCW should be to establish an open-ended Group of Governmental Experts to undertake more substantive work next year on lethal autonomous weapons systems, particularly the notion of how to maintain meaningful human control over weapon systems with autonomy in their critical functions. We sincerely hope the CCW lives up to this important task and proves it can act swiftly and effectively to protect civilians from autonomous weapons, as once deployed they will be impossible to regulate or contain.

Thank you.