

**With reference to UNODA's letter ODA/18-00107/STIC dated 5<sup>th</sup> February 2018 concerning resolution 72/28 entitled "Role of Science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament" Austria would like to add the following remarks:**

The continuous advances in science and technology increasingly influence our everyday lives and have the potential to benefit our efforts for international security and disarmament. However, at the same time as we seek the benefits from these developments we have to be aware of the possible impacts of non-civilian use of emerging technologies, specifically in the area of artificial intelligence and autonomous systems.

The possible production and use of automated weapon systems (AWS) confronts us with numerous ethical, moral, legal and security related concerns which Austria believes the international community must meet pre-emptively instead of reacting in retrospect to already existing circumstances.

The ability of automated weapon systems to adhere to international humanitarian law and human rights law, to uphold the principles of necessity, proportionality and distinction has not been demonstrated. Also accountability is not possible, when decisions are taken by machines. Therefore Austria maintains its position that there should not be any weapons systems that can act independently of meaningful human control, oversight or supervision when applying lethal force. In our view the development and use of such systems could have regional and global destabilizing effects, could result in a new type of warfare, would lead to an arms race as states will try to avoid comparative disadvantages; lower the threshold for the use of force as the human factor is removed from armed conflict; and contribute to regional and international instability.

The fact that the concerns raised by the potential development of AWS are discussed at the level of a Group of Governmental Experts within the CCW speaks to the urgency of the matter. Austria welcomes that positive progress has been made at the last GGE in April 2018, as all states affirmed that

1. International humanitarian law applies to AWS, thereby preserving the principles of accountability and responsibility.
2. Effective/meaningful human control has to be retained in every weapon system.

These two very important points indicate that there are restrictions to the means of warfare which should be spelled out more clearly. Given the complexity, breadth and the ever evolving nature of the topic however, there are still different interpretations concerning 1) the precise definition of AWS, 2) the exact degree of human control and 3) in which critical functions that human control must be maintained at all times.

Austria considers that these issues could be best clarified in negotiations on a regulatory framework to be introduced which is needed to provide a clear common understanding. For these reasons Austria supports the establishment of a legally binding instrument in order to prohibit autonomous weapons systems that are not under meaningful and effective human control over critical functions and proposes to start negotiations on a new protocol under the CCW.