



Permanent Representation
of the Federal Republic of Germany
to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva

Introductory Statement

by

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Permanent Representative of Germany to the Conference on Disarmament

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**“Private Sector Perspectives on the Development of
Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems”**

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished delegates,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to our event, jointly organized with the World Economic Forum, on “Private Sector Perspectives on the Development of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems”. It is my great pleasure to co-host this event together with Espen Barth Eide.

Rapid advances in technology during the last decade have raised the prospect of future development of autonomous systems in many applications. Certainly civilian developments are the driving force. However military applications seem to move closer to realization. The notion of the “Revolution in Military Affairs” is currently also strongly related to increasingly autonomous systems. The main drivers are the same in both sectors: First is the potential for reduced operating costs and personnel requirements. Second is the potential for increased safety in operating these platforms compared to manned systems. And third is the potential for increased capabilities.

Once autonomous technologies for civilian applications have been fully developed, it may be a relatively short way to use them for military applications, including Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems. To make it clear, the current and future military-technical developments most likely will utilize advanced research results from the civilians sector and intensifying the dual-use dilemma we already know in other areas.

Before this backdrop it is of paramount importance that we involve stakeholder from the private sector at an early stage in the inter-governmental discussion that currently takes place in the framework of the “Convention of Certain Conventional Weapons” on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems. The private sector can give us insights about their experiences concerning civilian application and to give governments a chance to deal progressively with this emerging issue in a military context.

In the discussion of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems in the framework of the CCW Human Rights and Ethical issues are of central importance. Therefore, I welcome very much that in the context of the World Economic Forum a conversation is already underway on the role and responsibilities of the private sector in this area. Indeed issues of corporate social responsibility need to be addressed, not only concerning ethical issues in the development of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, but as well concerning future challenges to prevent a proliferation of lethal autonomous technologies for illegitimate uses.

In view of the above I am extremely grateful to the World Economic Forum for its contribution to this issue, for having undertaken to organize this panel and I am anxious to hear where this discussion can take us.