Mr. President

As already stated during the General Debate, Switzerland welcomes the quality of the discussions and the work achieved since 2014 in the CCW, and we would like to thank the German Chair, Ambassador Michael Biontino, for the work undertaken and his readiness to continue this task. We also welcome the various contributions made over the past few years, including by international organisations, civil society and academia.

Regarding the continuation of our work, Switzerland would see value in the establishment of a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE), either now or at the Fifth Review Conference. If this year we decide to establish a Meeting of Experts, its mandate should reflect progress achieved so far and it should allocate sufficient time to do justice to the complexity of the issue. Most importantly, we should aim for an outcome document containing recommendations to be considered at the Review Conference.

Mr. President

In terms of substance, we can build our further work on the consensus among CCW High Contracting Parties as well as among observers that existing international law applies to all weapons systems, including LAWS, and has to be respected in all circumstances.
In this context, we could already aim for specific results, for instance regarding legal reviews of new weapons. The implementation of legal reviews constitutes an important element in preventing or restricting the employment of new weapons, means and methods of warfare that would violate international law in some or all circumstances and deserves more in-depth discussions.

Besides this concrete area for further work, we still have to continue and deepen our deliberations on a number of issues, as indicated in the way forward of the Chair’s report. This includes for instance the correlation between risks associated with LAWS and the characteristics of the respective systems. These risks would depend on their mobility, the environment and width of the area they operate in, the duration they are employed and the complexity or importance of the tasks delegated.

Finally, beyond ensuring compliance with international law, other concerns and possible challenges merit to be further addressed in the CCW. Discussions held so far revealed that ethical concerns with the possible development of LAWS persisted, notably for LAWS which would acquire and attack targets without appropriate human involvement. Equally, the consequences of the development of LAWS and their application in military and security operations raised a number of questions.

Thank you for your attention.