Japan believes that it is important to clarify the definition of LAWS. During the session entitled “Towards a working definition of LAWS,” which is proposed as an agenda item in this Informal Meeting, we expect that discussions on LAWS will lead to establishing its definition or building a common understanding of LAWS. However, regarding the main elements, like the definition of LAWS, we need to deepen our understanding through discussion. We are of the view that it is most important to identify broader common ground for our understanding, which could help start a formalized approach.

It is our understanding that in general, LAWS are a weapon capable of pursuing, without human intervention, autonomous deployment and recovery, identification of a target, judgment/decision of the attack and application of lethal force to the target, specifically a human target.

In order to identify the definition of LAWS, it is important to clarify what is “critical functions”. It also help to clarify the difference between “full autonomous weapons” and autonomous weapons. Identification of a target, judgment/decision of the attack among the each function above is the most important function because of it is related to lethality. It might be possible to classify that the weapons which carry out such important functions under human intervention or control is autonomous weapon, on the other hand, the weapons which is capable of carrying out such important functions without human intervention or control is “full autonomous weapons”.

It is useful to present and consider the criteria on “autonomy” in light of the ambiguity. There are variety levels of autonomy on autonomous weapons system. The levels depend on the human control as well as environment for its operation, and the complexity of the assumed tasks. Japan is of the view that autonomous which is used under LAWS means full autonomous.

The elements, such as “meaningful human control (MHC),” which were presented at the last two Informal Meetings are useful indicator to measure autonomy of the weapons. However, MHC itself is still abstract notion, and the relationship with autonomy is still unsolved.
First, if the relationship between MHC and autonomy is cleared, the weapons under MHC means the weapons except for full autonomous weapons. The weapons without MHC can make decision without human intervention. Therefore we would like to propose that the weapons without MHC mean full autonomous weapons.

Second, we would like to propose to clarify the functions subjected to MHC, which can distinguish full autonomous weapon and other weapons. We are of the view that it can be limited to critical function. Identification of a target, judgment/decision of the attack without MHC means full autonomous weapons. It might be possible to classify that the weapons which carry out Identification of a target, judgment/decision of the attack under human intervention or control is autonomous weapon, on the other hand, the weapons which is capable of carrying out such important functions without human intervention or control is “full autonomous weapons”.

Through this clarification, it is possible to narrow the scope of weapons which is classified as LAWS, and autonomous weapons and automated weapons carry out Identification of a target, judgment/decision of the attack under human intervention or control under MHC is different from LAWS.

It is necessary to be clarified that autonomy, automation and full autonomy is different notion. Furthermore, automation does not mean autonomy. Whether promoting "Automation" system does not mean autonomous system. Whether, advanced automated system can be autonomous system. The definition of terms should be carefully examined.