Intervention by Pakistan  
(Delivered by Usman Jadoon, Counsellor)

Security Issues (14 April 2016)

Mr. Chairman,

We thank the distinguished panellists for the useful and interesting presentations. They have added to our understanding of the subject.

Security issues are indeed a core concern arising from the development and deployment of LAWS. The debate on LAWS, thus far, has been dominated by legal and ethical concerns – which are extremely important and valid in their own right – and which we share. Even hard core security concerns are mostly couched in ethical and humanitarian jargon, perhaps as an emotional appeal that resonates with a larger audience.

We are of the view that even if the multitude of legal and ethical concerns with respect to LAWS is somehow overcome, the security concerns would till persist. These concerns are based on the fact that LAWS will lower the threshold of going to war resulting in armed conflict no longer being a measure of last resort. As remarked by Dr. Denise Garcia in her presentation, “force will be used more often and with less inhibition”.

LAWS would, therefore, undermine international peace and security. Their introduction would affect progress on disarmament and non-proliferation. Faced with prospect of being overwhelmed by LAWS, states possessing WMD capabilities would be reluctant to give them up, while others would feel encouraged to acquire them as a means of deterrence.

The states that are currently developing and using LAWS cannot afford to be complacent that such capabilities will not proliferate over time, and hence they too shall become vulnerable. Going by past experience we all know that monopolies over such technologies do not last forever. Since the developing countries, or later entrants, are not going to carry the burden of non-proliferation based on a neat division between haves and have-nots, an unchecked robotic arms race could ensue. Besides, LAWS could also proliferate to non-state actors.
Based on these considerations, we need to give greater attention to the security dimension of LAWS under the CCW framework as well as in other multilateral fora including the United Nations General Assembly and the Conference on Disarmament.

Our questions to the panellists are: (i) do you think that security issues in the context of LAWS are receiving ample attention; (ii) is the CCW forum well suited to address these security concerns; and (iii) what other venues are available to deal with such issues effectively.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.