Joint Statement on increasing multilateral exchanges of views regarding armed Uncrewed Aerial Vehicles

The proliferation and increased use of armed Uncrewed Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) have become noteworthy trends over recent years, driven by technological advancements and lower costs of production. Recent developments regarding the construction of military-grade UAVs with commercial parts and components pose additional challenges with regard to drone use and proliferation.

Although a number of informal exchanges on matters related to armed UAVs have taken place on the sidelines of international meetings, there is no dedicated discussion on this matter in United Nations bodies. The same applies to evidence-based reports: although a wealth of studies exist on armed UAVs, there is a need for updated data and information on the subject to be made available within the United Nations system. This could include an update to the “Study on Armed Unmanned Aerial Vehicles Prepared on the Recommendation of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters”, published by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs in 2015, and to “Increasing Transparency, Oversight and Accountability of Armed Unmanned Aerial Vehicles”, published by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research in 2017.

We consider that current developments justify holding multilateral exchanges of views on the potential implications of the increased acquisition and use of armed UAVs for international peace and security, particularly in the fields of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. These discussions would be best convened in an inclusive, transparent and universal setting, with the broadest participation of Member States.

United Nations disarmament bodies have a role to play in facilitating such exchanges, which could contribute to improving the transparency and oversight of the acquisition and use of armed UAVs, including by non-State actors.

We hereby wish to:

i) Reaffirm the applicability of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian law, to armed UAVs.

ii) Underscore the importance of providing timely information on the import and export of armed UAVs to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

iii) Note that, while the increased acquisition and use of armed UAVs are trends that also apply to States, the increased use of armed UAVs by non-State actors is a source of heightened concern.

iv) Support holding further multilateral exchanges on armed UAVs under the auspices of the United Nations.