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Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The following remarks draw upon a recent study undertaken by Bradford University and the Omega Research Foundation, the results of which are being distributed today, in a report entitled “*tear gassing by remote control.*”

The use of riot control agents (RCAs) as a method of warfare is prohibited under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). The Convention, however, permits the employment of such chemicals for law enforcement including domestic riot control purposes, provided they are used in “types and quantities” consistent with such purposes.

Whilst CWC States Parties are prohibited from developing RCA munitions for use in armed conflict, they may manufacture, acquire and utilise delivery systems to disseminate appropriate “types and quantities” of RCAs for law enforcement. However, there is continuing ambiguity as to the nature and specifications of those means of delivery that are prohibited under the Convention. This ambiguity has potentially dangerous consequences, allowing divergent interpretations, policy and practice amongst States Parties to emerge.

Of particular concern – given the current widespread State and commercial research and development of unmanned systems - are the implications for the regulation of “remote control” RCA means of delivery. These are dissemination mechanisms incorporating automatic or semi-automatic systems where the operator is directing operation of the platform and/or RCA delivery device at a distance from the target.

Our investigations have uncovered the development and promotion by a range of State and commercial entities of a wide variety of “remote control” RCA means of delivery including: indoor fixed-installation dispersion devices; external area clearing or area denial devices; automatic grenade launchers; multiple munition launchers; and delivery mechanisms mounted on unmanned ground vehicles and unmanned aerial vehicles or drones.

Inadequate regulation of such “remote control” RCA means of delivery has potentially serious consequences, including:

Proliferation to and misuse by non-State actors: Current commercial availability of “remote control” RCA means of delivery including, for example, via drones raises the danger of their acquisition and employment by a range of non-State actors including armed opposition forces, unregulated private military and security companies, and terrorist organisations.

Employment in armed conflict: In previous conflicts RCA means of delivery were employed to drive enemy forces from fortified positions; to disable and incapacitate large numbers of combatants; or in conjunction with conventional arms as a “force multiplier”. More recently, a range of contemporary RCA means of delivery, including certain “remote control” devices, have been promoted for use in counterinsurgency operations or urban warfare.

Misuse to facilitate large scale human rights abuses: This could include the blanket application of significant quantities of RCAs against large peaceful gatherings resulting in *en masse* ill-treatment or punishment; or the employment of RCA means of delivery in conjunction with firearms as a “force multiplier”, making such force more deadly.

Facilitate development and proliferation of autonomous weapons systems:

Continuing research and development of “remote control” RCA delivery mechanisms and unmanned systems more broadly may potentially contribute to the future development, proliferation and use of fully autonomous weapons systems, i.e. unmanned systems with on-board computers, that once activated, can select and engage targets without further human intervention.

Despite the ongoing development and promotion of a range of “remote control” RCA means of delivery of potential concern, none of the OPCW policy-making organs have effectively addressed this situation to date.

We therefore recommend that the OPCW and its Member States should:

- Conduct a review of the existing constraints, under relevant international law, upon the use of RCA means of delivery in law enforcement;
- Develop a process for determining which means of RCA delivery are prohibited under the CWC;
- Strengthen existing RCA declaration and reporting measures, and explore the feasibility and utility of introducing appropriate monitoring and verification measures;
- Utilise existing CWC consultation, investigation, and fact-finding mechanisms where activities of potential concern come to the attention of Member States, such as the reported development, production, marketing, transfer, stockpiling or use of inappropriate RCA means of delivery.

Given the evident dangers arising from the unregulated production, proliferation and potential misuse of “remote control” RCA means of delivery, we believe that the OPCW should address this issue as a matter of urgency. This Conference provides an appropriate forum to begin this process.

Thank you for your kind attention, and I request that this statement be made part of the CSP record and posted on the external server and website. .