



CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS

Process on Killer Robots Lacks Focus and Goal

Determine How to Retain Meaningful Human Control of Weapons Systems

(Geneva, 13 November 2017) – The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots urges states to swiftly determine how and where to draw the boundaries of future autonomy in weapon systems by committing to negotiate a ban on lethal autonomous weapons systems. More than 70 countries are participating in a Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) meeting on this topic that opens at the United Nations (UN) in Geneva today

“To avoid a future where machines select and attack targets without further human intervention, countries must draw the line against unchecked autonomy in weapon systems,” said Jody Williams, 1997 Nobel Peace Laureate and co-founder of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. “With adequate political will, governments can negotiate an international treaty and ban killer robots—fully autonomous weapons—within two years time.”

The [Campaign to Stop Killer Robots](#) is a global coalition co-founded by non-governmental organizations in October 2012. It is working to preemptively ban fully autonomous weapons, also known as lethal autonomous weapons systems.

The Convention on Conventional Weapons is a framework treaty that prohibits or restricts certain weapons and its 1995 protocol on blinding lasers is an example of a weapon being preemptively banned before it was acquired or used.

Williams is part of the [campaign’s delegation](#) to the week-long meeting of the [CCW Group of Governmental Experts](#) on lethal autonomous weapons systems chaired by Ambassador Amandeep Singh Gill of India. Countries will decide on future work on this issue at the annual [CCW Meeting of High Contracting Parties](#) on 24 November.

“Nations must respond to mounting concerns that the fragile diplomatic process to discuss concerns over lethal autonomous weapons systems is faltering financially, losing focus, and lacks a clear goal to work towards,” said Mary Wareham of Human Rights Watch, coordinator of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. “In the interim, we urge states that agree with the need to retain human control of weapons systems to swiftly adopt national policies and laws to that effect.”

This is the first-ever meeting of the CCW Group of Governmental Experts, but it marks the fourth time since 2014 that states have met at the CCW to consider lethal autonomous weapons systems. The Group of Governmental Experts was scheduled to meet twice in 2017, but the first week of talks earlier this year was [postponed and then cancelled](#) due to the implementation of a complex UN financial accounting system and the failure of certain states to pay their assessed CCW dues.

A [“food for thought” paper](#) prepared by the chair for the CCW meeting contains several technology and legal/ethical issues that do not directly relate to the issue of lethal

autonomous weapons systems. The campaign believes that other mechanisms should be pursued to consider broader questions about artificial intelligence and its potential impact on society. Human rights considerations are missing from the [provisional programme of work](#) and there appears to be insufficient time to consider proliferation and security concerns as well as the human control needed in future weapons systems.

“Instead of broadening this debate and losing focus, states should concentrate on fostering a shared political understanding of how and where to draw the necessary boundaries of autonomy in weapon systems,” said Richard Moyes of Article 36.

Dozens of countries have affirmed the need to retain human control over the selection of targets and use of force. In a working paper issued for the GGE meeting, [Russia says](#), “The overwhelming majority of States agree on the inadmissibility of loss of meaningful human control of such weapons systems.”

Several autonomous weapons systems with various degrees of human control are currently in use by high-tech militaries including CCW states the US, China, Israel, South Korea, Russia, and the UK. The concern is that low-cost sensors and advances in artificial intelligence are making it increasingly practical to design weapons systems that would target and attack without any meaningful human control. If the trend towards autonomy continues, humans will start to fade out of the decision-making loop, first retaining only a limited oversight role, and then no role at all.

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots fundamentally objects to permitting machines to take a human life on the battlefield or in policing, border control, and other circumstances. A total of [19 countries](#), now support the call to ban lethal autonomous weapons systems, including the Holy See, and more than two-dozen Nobel Peace Laureates. Last week, Williams highlighted the urgent need to prevent the development of killer robots at a [Vatican conference on disarmament](#) attended by Pope Francis.

Many members of the artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics community have endorsed the call to ban lethal autonomous weapons systems. More than 137 founders and directors of AI and robotics companies from 28 countries [endorsed an open letter](#) in August 2017 demanding stronger UN action to “protect all of us” from the dangers posed by lethal autonomous weapons systems. This month, more than 120 Australian AI and robotics experts [urged Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull](#) to take a strong stand against lethal autonomous weapons systems, while more than 135 Canadian AI and robotics experts [appealed to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau](#) to ban weapons systems that remove meaningful human control in the deployment of lethal force.

“The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots is not trying to stifle innovation in artificial intelligence and robotics and it does not wish to ban autonomous systems in the civilian or military world,” said Noel Sharkey of the International Committee for Robot Arms Control (ICRAC). “Rather we see an urgent need to prevent automation of the critical functions for selecting targets and applying violent force without human deliberation and to ensure meaningful human control for every attack.”

CCW delegates and UN Geneva-accredited media are invited to attend Campaign to Stop Killer Robots side event briefings on:

- [Monday, 13 November at 13:00 in Conference Room XXII](#), where campaigners will present new research and initiatives, including a new film.

- Wednesday, November 22 at 13:00 in Conference Room XXIV, where campaigners will assess the first Group of Governmental Experts meeting on lethal autonomous weapons systems and comment on future CCW work plans.

For more information on the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots see www.stopkillerrobots.org and please contact:

- Mary Wareham, HRW, +1-646-203-8292, wareham@hrw.org
- Daan Kayser, PAX, + 31 (0)6 575-281-87, Kayser@paxforpeace.nl
- Noel Sharkey, ICRC +44-7771-977-726, robot@blueyonder.co.uk

#