



CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS

Statement to the UN General Assembly First Committee on Disarmament and International Security

New York
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Given by the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots

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Thank you Madame Chair.

This is the sixth time that the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots has addressed delegates attending UNGA First Committee on Disarmament and International Security. We are the rapidly growing international coalition of 85 non-governmental organizations in 41 countries working to preemptively ban fully autonomous weapons systems, also known as lethal autonomous weapons systems.

We fundamentally object to permitting machines to take human life on the battlefield or in policing, border control and other circumstances. We see an urgent need to retain meaningful human control over weapons systems and the use of force. To ensure that happens it is crucial that states urgently move from talking about the parameters of this challenge to negotiating a new ban treaty.

In recent months, demands for action to confront the killer robots challenge have intensified.

As the UN disarmament chief has reminded you, the UN Secretary General flagged killer robots [in his address](#) to the high-level opening of UN General Assembly (UNGA) two weeks ago, stating: “the prospect of weapons that can select and attack a target on their own raises multiple alarms — and could trigger new arms races. ... Let’s call it as it is. The prospect of machines with the discretion and power to take human life is morally repugnant.”

In September, an overwhelming majority of Members of the European Parliament [adopted a resolution](#) with wide cross-party support that urges the start of “international negotiations on a legally binding instrument prohibiting lethal autonomous weapons systems.”

At the [last diplomatic meeting](#) on killer robots in August, a majority of states proposed commencing negotiations in 2019 on a new treaty. Many of the [26 countries demanding a prohibition](#) spoke repeatedly and forcefully of the need to negotiate a new ban treaty. Austria, Brazil, and Chile [recommended that states agree](#) “to negotiate a legally-binding instrument to ensure meaningful human control over the critical functions” of weapons systems.

Yet a minority of states, particularly Israel, Russia, South Korea, and United States, explicitly rejected calls to negotiate new international law. These states appear willing to keep the multilateral talks going, but only if the process continues to aim low and go slow. We question the rationale for doing so given the investments we see being made in the development of armed drones and other autonomous weapons systems with decreasing levels of human control.

States will decide on the way forward at the annual meeting of the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) at the UN in Geneva next month. The campaign is dismayed that the only action states have managed to recommend is to continue with the current discussion mandate.

Fully autonomous weapons raise a plethora of ethical, legal, operational, proliferation, technical, and other challenges. As the Arms Control Association found in its [first comment on this topic last month](#), “current policies and practices are clearly insufficient to address the dangers posed” by such weapons.

Madame Chair, political declarations, promises of greater transparency, discussions of best practice and other proposed measures that fall short of new international law are wholly insufficient to prevent the world from going down the dangerous path of developing fully autonomous weapons.

It’s time for responsible governments to act promptly and pursue multilateral negotiations on a new ban treaty to retain meaningful human control over weapons systems and the use of force. We expect nothing less and stand ready to work with all states keen to achieve this goal.

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