

# Rt Hon Winston Peters

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## Deputy Prime Minister

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control

Minister for State Owned Enterprises

Minister for Racing



- 1 MAY 2019

Mary Wareham  
Coordinator, Campaign to Stop Killer Robots  
[wareham@hrw.org](mailto:wareham@hrw.org)

Dear Mary Wareham

Thank you for your letter of 4 April 2019.

In statements to the Group of Governmental Experts considering this issue, New Zealand has been very clear that we have concerns about the legal, ethical and human rights challenges posed by the development and use of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS). We have firmly stated that meaningful human control must be applied to LAWS, and that the ability to exercise human control is critical as to whether a weapon would be able to comply with international humanitarian law as well as other legal requirements.

Our view is that international law already sets limits on LAWS, notably through Additional Protocol 1 to the Geneva Conventions. An autonomous weapon that could not fulfil the requirements of proportionality, distinction and precautions in an attack would not be lawful. Our priority is to ensure that current international law is implemented more effectively, including through wider use of Article 36 weapons reviews, to make sure there will always be meaningful human control over weapons incorporating autonomy.

New Zealand has lent its support to calls for a high-level political declaration, which is one of the options suggested by the United Nations Secretary-General in his Agenda for Disarmament. Such a declaration would set out key disciplines on the development and use of LAWS, such as meaningful human control, and the operational safeguards needed to ensure them.

The political declaration we seek would not exclude progress on other options over time. We support a forward work programme that ensures that discussions can

continue among a wide grouping of states on key technical, policy and legal issues relating to LAWS, including issues involved in a possible ban.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Winston Peters', with a small vertical mark to its right.

Rt Hon Winston Peters  
Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control