

Mr. President, representatives of nations, members of civil society,

During the past 5 years, at the Convention on Conventional Weapons, we have seen a greater understanding of the problems and challenges posed by autonomous weapon systems. The ICRAC is satisfied with the general consensus on the need to retain human control over these systems, in particular, on the critical functions of selection and elimination of objectives. Therefore, we believe that the time has come to establish binding legal mechanisms that restrict the use of autonomous weaponry, underlining the importance of human judgment in critical decisions.

During our participation in this convention, we have generated a large number of scientific articles, books and reports that emphasize three main classes of risk.

First, this type of weapons can not guarantee compliance with international humanitarian law. We should not give a blank check to future technology. With the large-scale commercialization of AI it is true that we are observing a great innovation in areas that are beneficial for humanity, but at the same time we are witnessing the appearance of many problems with biases in decision and facial recognition algorithms that can be dramatic if they are applied in a warlike context.

If nations invest based on techno-scientific speculations, we believe that it will be practically impossible to return to the starting position when the new typologies of conflict that announce these weapons materialize. We urge states to consider the veracity of current technology and its limitations in the critical selection of objectives.

Second, there are considerable moral values at risk. No machine, computer or algorithm is capable of recognizing a human being as such, nor can he respect it as a human being with rights and dignity. He only observes it as a bit of information. A machine, without intuition, without ethics or morals, can not even understand what it means to be in a state of war, much less what it means to end a human life.

Decisions to end human life must be made by humans and in a non-arbitrary way to be justified. In addition, we must not confuse the fact that humans develop computer programs with the objective that the calculated results of these programs constitute human decisions. While responsibility for the deployment of lethal force is a necessary condition for compliance with minimum ethical standards in armed conflict, that responsibility alone is not enough, also requiring recognition of the human, of its dignity, and the reflection on the value of life and the justification of the use of violent force.

Third, autonomous weapons systems represent a great danger to global security. The threshold for the application of military force will be reduced and the likelihood of conflict will increase. We are concerned that the human control mechanisms established and controlled for double verification and reconsideration, function as security boxes or switches and can be easily disconnected. This, in combination with unpredictable algorithmic interactions and unpredictable results, will increase the instability of the conflict. In addition, the development and use of autonomous weapons by some States unilaterally will provide strong incentives for their proliferation, including their use by actors who are not responsible to the legal frameworks governing the use of force. Do we really need this new competitive arms race?

From the ICRAC as well as from other organizations involved in the Stop Killer Robots Campaign, representing a large part of international civil society, we urge the Convention to lay the foundations for the elaboration of an international treaty whose main objective is to prohibit preventive way autonomous weapons in clear application of the precautionary principle.