

CCW: Statement by the International Committee for Robot Arms Control

Submitted May 16, 2014

Thank you Mr Chairperson,

Distinguished delegates

The International Committee for Robot Arms Control - or ICRAC, as we are known - would like to thank the French Ambassador for convening this excellent meeting with such renowned experts on the issue of lethal autonomous weapon systems.

ICRAC is also grateful to States Parties for engaging in such a fruitful exchange over the last three days. Since 2009, ICRAC has pressed for the international community to begin this process. We are delighted to now be part of it, and we have been encouraged by the quality and intensity of discussion at this CCW meeting.

ICRAC urges States Parties to continue their work and to consider the absolute and preemptive prohibition of development, production and use of autonomous weapon systems. Autonomous weapon systems are understood to be defined by the fact that they select and engage targets without human intervention. It is understood, also, that allowances for certain purely defensive, *automated* systems might be acceptable under a general ban on *autonomous* weapons.

ICRAC stresses that *autonomous* weapon systems pose pressing dangers to global peace and security. If *not* prohibited, they will likely proliferate rapidly, trigger arms races, lower the threshold to war, interact in ways no one is prepared for, and undermine the right to life.

ICRAC asserts that, for the foreseeable future, we cannot guarantee that autonomous weapon systems will comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We suggest that the combined strengths of humans and computers operating together, with humans always in meaningful control of targeting and engagement decisions, best serves military objectives and is the wisest path from a strategic, legal and ethical perspective.

Most fundamentally, ICRAC always asserted that decision-making about the application of violent force must not be delegated to machines. This is most obvious regarding the taking of human life. But also the use of *nonlethal* force to coerce people on the decision-making of machines is an offense to human dignity and a threat to democracy and human rights.

ICRAC proposes that a ban could be grounded in principles of human control and responsibility, as well as human dignity. These principles, plus clear standards for meaningful human control and accountable human decision-making, could provide the basis for compliance and its verification.

We must never allow conflict to become an autonomous force, embodied in a technology that is not under human control. Fortunately, given the will of the international community, there do not appear to be any unsurmountable obstacles to the prevention of such a future.

ICRAC urges states to continue working on the issue and looks forward to providing further expertise and assistance.