

International Committee for Robot Arms Control
Statement to the UN GGE Meeting 2018
Delivered by Dr Thompson Chengeta, on 9 April 2018

Mr. Chairperson,

I speak on behalf of the International Committee for Robot Arms Control [ICRAC], a founding member of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. Ambassador Gill, we thank you for your important work. Mr Chairperson, we are going to focus here on four points:

FIRST, a ban on LAWS will have no negative impact on the development of socially beneficial uses of autonomy, robotics or artificial intelligence. In fact, such a ban will direct more resources and specialists to work on humanitarian and beneficial applications.

SECOND, human control of weapon systems is a critical key component of the present discussions. It does not matter what name or term is used to describe human control, what is imperative is that we make sure that human control is consistent with applicable legal, ethical and moral standards.

THIRD, human input in the making of judgements to use violent force is at the centre of legal, ethics and moral standards pertaining to human responsibility for use of such force. No matter how attractive, if a proposed definition of human control does not resolve the accountability gap challenge, then such a proposal is legally inadequate. To that end, States should ask the question: What is the **Legally Required Level of Human Control** at each “touch point” in the human-machine interaction chain? At every step in the development, deployment, targeting and use of a weapon system, there is an obligation to ensure that the system is both capable of being used in compliance with applicable legal norms.

FOURTH, Poland and ICRC Working Papers’ emphasis on ethics and reassertion of the Principle of Non-Delegation of the Authority to Kill to non-human mechanisms is worth noting. Dictates of public conscience must always take precedence over any short-term advantage that might be gained from autonomous technologies. Furthermore, respect for human rights and human dignity, even within armed conflict, is a moral imperative recognized by the UN and the CCW. ICRAC reiterates the spirit of the Martens Clause—that morality can provide a strong basis for new law.

Finally, human control over critical functions of weapon systems and a ban on fully autonomous weapon systems are two sides of the same coin. States are urged to focus on the requirement of human control rather than technical definitions of autonomy. Further, States must move towards negotiation of a legally binding instrument on this issue.

Mr Chairperson, I thank you.