



CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS

Campaign to Stop Killer Robots statement by Mary Wareham, Human Rights Watch to the Convention on Conventional Weapons meeting of experts

Geneva, Switzerland

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The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots would like to thank you Ambassador Simon-Michel and your team for the work you have put into this first CCW meeting of experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems. We appreciate all the expert presentations and thank all friends of the chair for their work in preparing in the sessions.

We are most grateful to all those who intervened to provide national statements, make comments, and ask questions. The depth and breadth of your interventions demonstrate that adding this emerging challenge to the CCW's program of work was the right thing to do at the right time in history.

This high level of engagement also shows there is appetite for continuing this work in 2015 and the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots would certainly support that. We would like to see the CCW continue to advance the issue by agreeing to a mandate in November that creates a formal Group of Governmental Experts and by dedicating much more time—perhaps four weeks instead of four days—to addressing the concerns that have been raised.

This week's deliberations showed us that there is great concern with the prospect of future weapons that, once activated, would select and engage targets without meaningful human control. Several examples of existing robotic systems with various degrees of autonomy and lethality were provided and there was acknowledgment that these precursors indicate the trend to ever-greater autonomy in warfare.

We have had a robust debate over the viability of existing international humanitarian and human rights law in adequately meeting the challenges posed by fully autonomous weapons. There was discussion of how killer robots could undermine the fundamental principle of human dignity because they could take human life without respecting it. We also had considerable discussion

about the desirability of a ban or moratorium or restrictions to supplement existing law and best practices.

The discussion on operational matters looked at how technological trends in the military are heading towards ever-greater speed over ever-greater distances making communications even more challenging. With that comes many questions including the high cost, proliferation, and threats to the traditional command and control structure.

We welcome the interest in discussing legal reviews of new weapons systems, but note that this is not going to be sufficient for a comprehensive international response to the risks posed by fully autonomous weapons.

Perhaps most importantly this week we heard a number of countries acknowledge the relevance of the Martens Clause and its legal requirement that the principles of humanity and the dictates of the public conscience be taken into account. The strong media coverage and intense interest on social media in this first multilateral meeting on killer robots are clear indicators that there is widespread public interest in what governments can and will do to address this emerging challenge.

This week several countries called for a ban on fully autonomous weapons and we are sure that more will join them. We heard many more highlight the importance of always maintaining meaningful human control over targeting and attack decisions. We heard no country vigorously defend or argue for the use of lethal autonomous systems weapons.

These are all indicators to us that there is interest in not only continuing the CCW work on killer robots, but perhaps in creating a future legally-binding instrument to set down some clear rules on the matter. We realize this is only the beginning for multilateral consideration of this topic, but for us it is hard to draw any other conclusion.

In order to take this work forward here and in any other multilateral fora, we urge all nations to develop their policy on fully autonomous weapons in consultation with relevant actors, including civil society experts. This week we saw that several countries have started to actively working to develop their national views on fully autonomous weapons and we urge all nations to do so in order for this multilateral work to have depth as well as to reach common understandings and achieve concrete outcomes.

Our coalition of 51 non-governmental organizations is active in more than 70 countries and stands ready to engage with you at the national, regional, and international level. We look forward to seeing you again in November and to expanded work in 2015.

Thank you.

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