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United Nations  
Interregional Crime and Justice  
Research Institute

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**THE CCW MEETING OF EXPERTS ON LETHAL  
AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS SYSTEMS (LAWS)**

**UNICRI**

**UNITED NATIONS INTERREGIONAL CRIME AND  
JUSTICE RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

**Geneva, United Nations,  
13-17 April 2015**

Mr Chairman,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished experts,

Let me begin by saying how very pleased I am, to be speaking today in front of such a distinguished audience, on behalf of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI).

We fully support the need for and the urgency of this debate, and welcome the decision of the 2014 CCW Meeting of High Contracting Parties to convene this meeting of experts on emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems, in the context of the objectives and purposes of the Convention.

Operating within and attempting to manage the very volatile international security environment is an increasingly difficult and evermore complex challenge. The United Nations High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change confirmed this phenomenon, when the panel observed - "Today, more than ever before, threats are interrelated and a threat to one is a threat to all. The mutual vulnerability of weak and strong has never been clearer."

At UNICRI, we believe that very high levels of co-operation and co-ordination both between different national agencies and among countries and international and regional Organizations are essential to an effective strategy for the mitigation of global threats and challenges.

Currently, UNICRI implements numerous programmes on issues such as chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) risks mitigation, cyber-crime, illicit trafficking in precious metals, environmental crime, security at major events, counter-terrorism. In all its programmes, UNICRI advocates new, multi-lateral and multi-stakeholder approaches to both traditional and emerging issues in the field of crime prevention, the promotion of justice and the development of peace and security.

Our work is based on the adoption of holistic approaches to problems, through which all stakeholders, while operating autonomously, can establish common goals; identify and manage resources to achieve these goals; clearly allocate responsibilities and tasks; elaborate functioning channels of communication; create a security culture based on common learning; and ensure that lessons learnt are incorporated and absorbed throughout the whole system.

An excellent example of this is the European Union's CBRN Centres of Excellence risk mitigation initiative, implemented by UNICRI and the Joint Research Center of the European Commission. This initiative, which started in 2010, puts in place a framework for cooperation and coordination between all levels of government and international partners. The network, created by UNICRI, is currently present in more than 50 partner countries across the globe, grouped in eight geographic Regions.

Given the relative ease at which a terrorist organization or other non-state actor could mount a CBRN attack using a robotic delivery system and the unparalleled rate of

development and availability of robotics, we have been looking into the issue related to the developments in robotics and Artificial Intelligence for some time already.

Now UNICRI seeks to transfer accumulated experience and best practices by launching new initiatives within its Security Governance programme on issues such as bio-safety and bio-security, bio-technology, intelligence sharing, and the security implications of Big Data analytics. In doing so, UNICRI aims to engage security experts, policy makers, scientists and business managers to identify the new challenges to global security and set out a broad framework for addressing them.

Continuing with its tradition of being innovative in new areas of international security, UNICRI recently initiated its programme on the security implications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and autonomous robotics. At present the programme focuses predominantly on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS).

As a UN entity with a neutral perspective and global reach, UNICRI seeks to support the ongoing debate on LAWS in order to mitigate the risk of misinformed decisions irreparably harming innovation and technological progression. To this end, UNICRI sees great benefit in the establishment of an international center, connecting the robotics and AI communities with the policymakers that design systems of governance and the militaries that invest into research, development and use of such technologies.

Such an international center would not promulgate policies, best practices or criteria and metrics for evaluation, but rather will seek to facilitate the development of critical information by bringing the robotics and AI community together with policymakers to facilitate the voluntary exchange of information, and raise awareness and educate all communities about potential risks.

Activities will start with the development of a multi-lateral and multi-stakeholder network of experts comprised of representatives from the AI and robotics industry, public/private investors, academia, non-governmental organizations, international organizations and associations, military, law enforcement agencies, intelligence services, border control agencies, national Ministries of Science and Technology, Defense, and international humanitarian and human rights institutions. To build this network, UNICRI will rely on its existing national, regional and international partnerships.

To support building this network, UNICRI sees strength in closely cooperating and coordinating with UN entities already active and engaged in this subject, such the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR).

UNICRI further sees benefit in adopting a comprehensive view of LAWS that encompasses consideration of the implications for both international humanitarian law and civil society. The latter includes the exploitation of robotics and AI by non-state actors, as well as their role in areas such as law enforcement and border control. A comprehensive approach such as this will ensure that policymakers remain sensitive to potential future threats to humanity presented by developments in robotics and AI and that a 'rapid reaction service' for such emerging threats exists.

Let me conclude where I started, the increased global connectivity of present times that has also increased the speed with which security risks become global. The global connectivity, as we all know, and as we see in present times has no precedent in the history of mankind and this increased connectivity has had a proportionate effect on the speed with which any risk spreads.

Therefore, the basic tenets of an effective security framework, in our view, should be that security is no longer a monopoly of traditional security providers, rather security can be achieved only through involvement of relevant stakeholders from various disciplines – including science and security communities, international organizations, industry, civil society, among others. It also requires us to become innovative in our approaches: tackling new and different threats requires new and different thinking.

Bringing together subject experts, concerned with the scientific, technical and policy aspects are at the heart of our approach. It is all about connecting dots that didn't exist in order to change the world, to make it a safer place.

With almost 50 years of experience, UNICRI has structured its work programmes and modus operandi so as to ensure it remains open and responsive to the needs of the international community as they arise.

I thank you for your attention.