

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank the Chair for his excellent leadership during this meeting, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to share comments on behalf of the Future of Life Institute.

First, I read the following on behalf of the nearly 4,000 AI and robotics researchers and scientists from around the world who have called on the United Nations to move forward to negotiations to consider a legally binding instrument on lethal autonomous weapons.

*Autonomous weapons select and engage targets without human intervention. They might include, for example, armed quadcopters that can search for and eliminate people meeting certain pre-defined criteria, but do not include cruise missiles or remotely piloted drones for which humans make all targeting decisions. Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology has reached a point where the deployment of such systems is — practically if not legally — feasible within years, not decades, and the stakes are high: autonomous weapons have been described as the third revolution in warfare, after gunpowder and nuclear arms.*

*Many arguments have been made for and against autonomous weapons, for example that replacing human soldiers by machines is good by reducing casualties for the owner but bad by thereby lowering the threshold for going to battle. The key question for humanity today is whether to start a global AI arms race or to prevent it from starting. If any major military power pushes ahead with AI weapon development, a global arms race is virtually inevitable, and the endpoint of this technological trajectory is obvious: autonomous weapons will become the Kalashnikovs of tomorrow. Unlike nuclear weapons, they require no costly or hard-to-obtain raw materials, so they will become ubiquitous and cheap for all significant military powers to mass-produce. It will only be a matter of time until they appear on the black market and in the hands of terrorists, dictators wishing to better control their populace, warlords wishing to perpetrate ethnic cleansing, etc. Autonomous weapons are ideal for tasks such as assassinations, destabilizing nations, subduing populations and selectively killing a particular ethnic group. We therefore believe that a military AI arms race would not be beneficial for humanity. There are many ways in which AI can make battlefields safer for humans, especially civilians, without creating new tools for killing people.*

*Just as most chemists and biologists have no interest in building chemical or biological weapons, most AI researchers have no interest in building AI weapons — and do not want others to tarnish their field by doing so, potentially creating a major public backlash against AI that curtails its future societal benefits. Indeed, chemists and biologists have broadly supported international agreements that have successfully prohibited chemical and biological weapons, just as most physicists supported the treaties banning space-based nuclear weapons and blinding laser weapons.*

*In summary, we believe that AI has great potential to benefit humanity in many ways, and that the goal of the field should be to do so. Starting a military AI arms race is a bad idea, and should be prevented by a ban on offensive autonomous weapons beyond meaningful human control.*

Second, on behalf of the 137 CEOs of AI and robotics companies around the world, and in light of the rapid progress we're seeing in artificial intelligence, I add:

*We do not have long to act. Once this Pandora's box is opened, it will be hard to close. We therefore implore the High Contracting Parties to find a way to protect us all from these dangers.*

Finally, I would add that nearly 240 AI-related organizations and over 3,000 individuals have taken their concerns about LAWS a step further, and they have pledged that they *will neither participate in nor support the development, manufacture, trade, or use of lethal autonomous weapons.*

Thousands of artificial intelligence researchers around the world are calling on states to begin negotiations toward a legally binding instrument regarding LAWS, and we are happy to do all we can to help clarify technical issues surrounding delegates' concerns about definitions and meaningful human control.

Thank you.