

THE WAY AHEAD FOR THE CCW ON KILLER ROBOTS (LAWS)

By Jody Williams, Chair, Nobel Women's Initiative, a co-founder of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots

Thank you for allowing me, on behalf of my sister Nobel Peace Prize Laureates of the Nobel Women's Initiative, to speak on the critical issue of the "**Way Ahead**" on lethal autonomous weapons systems, which I prefer to call killer robots, in the CCW.

We appreciate the recognition by many states that a focus solely on transparency and Article 36 is not a proper response to tackling the myriad issues related to moving forward on killer robots in the CCW or elsewhere. Since Article 36 reviews by their nature will never be public, they will never quell the various concerns expressed here, including ethics and morality, IHL, human rights law, and meaningful human control, among others.

If we want to apply any article to killer robots – and for that matter other weapons, including those that hold the peoples of the world hostage to possible global destruction – perhaps what we should be considering is the completely ignored Article 26 the UN Charter. Article 26 charged the members of the Security Council to develop plans to control armaments and reduce military spending in order to use valuable resources for the needs of humanity and "*[i]n order to promote the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security*". The promise of Article 26 has never been filled. It has been completely ignored by the Security Council.

We are unambiguously of the view that moving forward with killer robots will create new "military necessity" which will result in a new arms race with the resulting continuation of the diversion of human resources and billions and billions and billions of dollars that would be better used for meeting the basic needs of people around the world and in so doing significantly contribute to global security. Proceeding with the development of killer robots would clearly continue and reinforce the decades of completely ignoring Article 26 of the UN Charter.

We appreciate the discussions this week and last year in the CCW. But sometimes it seems that some points of the discussions can be somewhat diversionary and serve to complicate things that in their essence are not complicated at all.

We hear concern that rapidly moving forward on killer robots is premature because the weapons systems themselves are complicated and we can't even define them so how could we ban them. We also hear that "meaningful human control" is difficult to define so how do we proceed on that?

We cannot deny the complexities of developing a killer robot, but that does not mean it is complicated to understand essentially what we are talking about. Likewise, is “meaningful human control” that difficult to understand?

As the US delegation pointed out this morning, for example, existing drones are not under consideration in the discussions because they “operated by human beings in real time.” The logical extension of that would be if you remove being “operated by human beings in real time” from the drone, it would then become a killer robot. So, current drones are not killer robots, remove the human operation of them, they become killer robots. Pretty clear difference as far as I can see.

And, it would also seem that that formulation gives us one way of thinking about “meaningful human control” when talking about LAWS – and that is that meaningful human control over a lethal weapon or lethal weapons systems requires that the weapon or weapons systems be operated by human beings in real time. That makes it easier to grasp a concept of meaningful human control.

So, what do we believe is the way forward? We agree with those states that have proposed the formation of a GGE of three or four weeks and mandated to cover the various issues and concerns I already mentioned above. Further, we believe that a GGE should be established with a mind to moving forward with a legal instrument that would prohibit lethal autonomous weapons systems without meaningful human control. In other words, moving forward to stop killer robots.

We cannot forget that a GGE does not inevitably result in the ban of a weapon. This very body established a GGE when looking at the possibility of amending Protocol II of the CCW in the early 1990s. That GGE went nowhere and the discussions were taken out of the CCW, where the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty was negotiated in one year.

In concluding I must note that we are beaten over the head that killer robots are inevitable. “Inevitable” is disempowering and deadening. If something is inevitable there is no use in trying to change that inevitability.

We absolutely reject the notion that we as human beings do not have control over deciding our own future. We reject the notion that killer robots are inevitable. They are only inevitable if those in this room and countless others around the world who oppose lethal weapons without meaningful human control are willing to roll over and allow the not necessarily inevitable to become a deadly and terrifying reality.

THANK YOU.