



CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS

Diplomatic Efforts to Address Killer Robots Falter *Convention on Conventional Weapons Talks Cancelled Due to Lack of Funds*

(Geneva, 30 May 2017) – The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots is deeply disappointed that the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) has cancelled a crucial week of formal discussions on fully autonomous weapons in August. This step was taken because of the failure of several states, most notably Brazil, to pay their assessed dues for the convention’s meetings.

“The collective failure of countries to find a solution to their financial woes doesn’t mean they can stop addressing concerns over weapons that would select and attack targets without further human intervention” said Mary Wareham of Human Rights Watch, coordinator of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. “If the CCW is unable to act, nations must find other ways to maintain the momentum toward a ban,” she said. “Countries that agree with the need to retain human control of weapons systems should move swiftly to adopt national policies and laws and to negotiate a new international treaty prohibiting fully autonomous weapons.”

The call for a preemptive ban on fully autonomous weapons has been [endorsed by 19 countries](#) and dozens more states have affirmed the need to retain human control over the selection of targets and use of force. This clearly indicates that they see a need to prevent the development of fully autonomous weapons. Last December, China became the first permanent member of the UN Security Council [to find that new international law is required](#) to regulate fully autonomous weapons.

The Campaign calls on countries to urgently address the enormous humanitarian challenges posed by these weapons by endorsing the call for a ban. It is vital and urgent that all stakeholders work together to secure a new international treaty before these weapons are unleashed.

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots fundamentally objects to permitting machines to take a human life on the battlefield or in policing, border control, and other circumstances. It calls for a preemptive ban on fully autonomous weapons through new international law as well as through domestic legislation.

Following the [launch of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots](#) and [a debate in the Human Rights Council](#), countries [agreed in November 2013](#) to begin discussing what they called lethal autonomous weapons systems at the Convention on Conventional Weapons at the United Nations in Geneva. The CCW is a framework treaty that prohibits or restricts certain weapons and its 1995 protocol on blinding lasers is an example of a weapon being preemptively banned before it was acquired or used.

Most of the CCW’s [124 high contracting parties](#) participated in three meetings on lethal autonomous weapons systems in 2014-2016, in addition to UN agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots.

Last December at their Fifth Review Conference CCW [states decided to formalize and expand those deliberations](#) by establishing a Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems to meet in August and November 2017, chaired by Ambassador Amandeep Singh Gill of India.

However, on 30 May, the CCW's president-designate Ambassador Matthew Rowland of the UK announced that the Group of Governmental Experts meeting scheduled for 21-25 August has been cancelled due to a lack of funds. Rowland issued [several warnings](#) that the lack of payment of assessed financial contributions would mean the likely cancellation of CCW meetings planned for 2017.

Several countries have financial arrears from previous years, but according to the UN's [official summary](#), Brazil accounts for 86 percent of the outstanding contributions due to four core humanitarian disarmament treaties, including the CCW. Brazil last paid its assessed CCW contributions in 2010. The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots has [appealed to Brazil to pay](#) its outstanding contributions without delay and it challenges CCW states to achieve cost saving measures in other ways that do not require the cancellation of key meetings.

“We cannot allow the multilateral process on killer robots to be hindered by the inability of a handful of states to pay their UN dues,” said Wareham. “The strong support and consensus demonstrated by states in formalizing their deliberations on fully autonomous weapons shows why states should accord top priority to finding a solution without delay.”

Several autonomous weapons systems with various degrees of human control are currently in use by high-tech militaries including CCW states the US, China, Israel, South Korea, Russia, and the UK. The concern is that low-cost sensors and advances in artificial intelligence are making it increasingly practical to design weapons systems that would target and attack without any meaningful human control. If the trend towards autonomy continues, humans will start to fade out of the decision-making loop, first retaining only a limited oversight role, and then no role at all.

France, UK, and the US supported establishing the CCW Group of Governmental Experts last December, but remain unambitious in their overall goals for the process by proposing a focus on sharing best practices and achieving greater transparency in the conduct of legal reviews of new weapons systems. Russia openly opposed the creation of a Group of Governmental Experts, but did not block multilateral consensus for establishing one.

“Policy commitments and other promises not to develop or use fully autonomous weapons will crumble when opponents acquire them,” said Wareham. “The only logical way to avoid a future of killer robots is to legislate a preemptive ban before it's too late. We stand ready to work with states committed to securing the ban now.”

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For more information on the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots see: www.stopkillerrobots.org