



CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS

Statement to the UN General Assembly First Committee on Disarmament and International Security

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By Mary Wareham, Human Rights Watch
Coordinator, Campaign to Stop Killer Robots

AS DELIVERED

This month marks three years since a small group of non-governmental organizations met in New York and agreed to establish the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots to work for a preemptive ban on weapons that would select and attack targets without further human intervention. We established this global coalition to provide a coordinated civil society response to the many ethical, legal, technical, and other challenges raised by these autonomous weapons systems.

The period since then has seen our campaign grow in numbers and the nascent movement to address these weapons grow in strength as Nobel Peace laureates, faith leaders, scientists and artificial intelligence experts endorse the call for a ban. Numerous publications and global media coverage have helped build greater public awareness about the need to tackle autonomous weapons.

Most importantly nations swiftly agreed to begin discussing questions relating to the emerging technology of “lethal autonomous weapons systems” at the Convention on Conventional Weapons or “CCW” in Geneva. Approximately 90 states attended nine days of CCW meetings on the topic held in April 2014 and May of this year. Many contributed substantively to the deliberations. The notion of ensuring meaningful human control over targeting and attack decisions emerged as a touchstone for consideration of the issue. Possible ways forward identified at the CCW include a new protocol

prohibiting autonomous weapons and there is good precedent for such a pre-emptive ban in the CCW.

We commended the fast decision states took by consensus to initiate these informal talks on autonomous weapons. However, our campaign is becoming increasingly concerned that the CCW process is aiming too low and going too slow. We must ask if it represents an adequate response to the multiple concerns that have been raised as the current speed of technological change requires urgent deliberations and rapid action.

It's time for states to step-up the deliberations by agreeing to a more tangible and ambitious outcome-oriented mandate ahead of the CCW's Fifth Review Conference in December 2016. At the next annual meeting of the CCW on 13 November, the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots urges states to agree to establish a formal Group of Governmental Experts to continue their work through expanded discussions. A Group of Governmental Experts on autonomous weapons systems would help advance deliberations to a new level, demonstrate progress commensurate with technological developments, and emphasize that the CCW work is outcome-oriented and not a talk shop.

Open-ended GGEs have been the established method of work for CCW deliberations over the past two decades and based on that long-standing precedent, the GGE would be open to all interested states as well as to NGO representatives while key documents would be translated into the official UN languages. A GGE would therefore help to enable the broadest possible participation by all states.

It's clear that there is strong interest and appetite among states for continuing their deliberations on autonomous weapons in 2016 but the CCW does not have to be the only multilateral venue to consider this topic. As the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions shows, there is an important role for the Human Rights Council to play on this emerging international issue of concern.

We also urge all countries to develop and articulate their national policy on autonomous weapons and indicate their support for the call to preemptively ban the weapons or take other action. We look forward to hearing your views on establishing a Group of Governmental Experts.

In our view killer robots are not “inevitable” but a ban on these weapons is. It’s just a matter of how and when we get there.

We look forward to continued cooperation with states, the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other actors in our common effort to address the concerns raised by autonomous weapons systems.

Thank you.