



CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS

Intervention at Germany's informal event on lethal autonomous weapons systems

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Thank you Ambassador Biontino for convening this [event](#) and to both speakers for your presentations. I would like to make a few remarks in my capacity as coordinator of the [Campaign to Stop Killer Robots](#) with respect to the process to address concerns over weapons systems that, once activated, would select and attack targets without human control.

We draw your attention to the [open letter issued by technology leaders](#), which has received wide media attention over the past week, as it is specifically addressed to the [Convention on Conventional Weapons](#) (CCW).

The [letter](#) has been signed by more than 100 founders and directors of “companies building the technologies in artificial intelligence and robotics that may be repurposed to develop autonomous weapons” who state that they “feel especially responsible in raising this alarm.”

The signatories “warmly welcome the decision by the Convention on Conventional Weapons to establish a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on lethal autonomous weapons systems” and state that their “researchers and engineers are eager to offer technical advice to your deliberations.”

The signatories commend the appointment of Ambassador Amandeep Singh Gill of India as chair of the GGE and express regret that the GGE has not met yet due to a small number of states failing to pay their financial contributions to the UN. They state: “We urge the high contracting parties therefore to double their efforts at their first meeting planned for November.”

The signatories outline specific concerns at the prospect of lethal autonomous weapons systems, stating that “once the Pandora’s box is opened, it will be hard to close.” They conclude: “we implore high contracting parties to find a way to protect us all from these dangers.”

Many signatories to this letter signed a previous call issued in 2015 demanding a ban on lethal autonomous weapons systems. This latest letter should be viewed as supporting that earlier call due to the multiple concerns expressed and demand for preventative action by the Convention on Conventional Weapons.

We urge you to heed this latest call to action. Our Campaign to Stop Killer Robots viewed the decision earlier this year to cancel the first planned round of the GGE as [deeply disappointing](#). Now we are dismayed and appalled that there has been no progress to resolve that financial situation dilemma. It is unacceptable that the technologies that will enable the development of

lethal autonomous weapons systems bound ahead while the last substantive deliberations on concerns over fully autonomous weapons was in April 2016.

Remember how this topic first came to multilateral attention when special rapporteur Christof Heyns [presented his in-depth report](#) on the topic at the Human Rights Council in May 2013. Our Campaign to Stop Killer Robots was there that day and we heard two dozen countries welcome the report and acknowledge the need to discuss the many ethical, legal, operational, proliferation, technical and other challenges raised by fully autonomous weapons. Several states however said this was “a disarmament issue,” which led to the agreement at the end of that year to begin discussions at the Convention on Conventional Weapons.

We participated in the three informal CCW meetings on questions relating to lethal autonomous weapons systems. Our Campaign to Stop Killer Robots worked for and supported the decision taken by states at the CCW Review Conference last December to establish the Group of Governmental Experts on these weapons. At that time, we said the move took the deliberations to a formal, action-oriented setting from which states could begin negotiations on new international law. We expressed our sincere hope that this formal process would result in a new protocol to preemptively ban lethal autonomous weapons systems.

Yet months later there has been no progress toward a meeting of the CCW GGE, let alone a start on negotiations of such a legal instrument.

What is the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots doing while this diplomatic process falters? We are engaging with the major debtors to the CCW and urging them to pay without delay. We are preparing a publication on country policy and practice on lethal autonomous weapons systems, drawing on the statements made in multilateral for as well as from national policies and related developments. We are intensifying [our outreach in capitals](#) to increase legislative and public awareness and encourage actions to ban fully autonomous weapons.

We will not rest until the concerns that continue to multiply have been addressed through the creation of a new treaty banning fully autonomous weapons. We call on states to heed the call for action and get the diplomatic process back on track urgently.

Thank you.