



CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

7 May 2014

Convention on Conventional Weapons meeting of experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems

Geneva

13-16 May 2014

What is the CCW?

The Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) is an umbrella convention adopted in 1980 that contains five separate protocols on various weapons and explosive remnants of war. A total of [117 states are party to the CCW](#). Protocol IV preemptively banned blinding lasers before they were fielded or used and as such provides a relevant precedent for work on fully autonomous weapons. The CCW also provided a useful incubator for efforts to address the humanitarian consequences of antipersonnel landmines in the 1990s and cluster munitions in the 2000s.

Who is part of the CCW?

The [117 states](#) party to the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) includes all five permanent members of UN Security Council and “major players” in terms of those working to actively develop ever more autonomous weapons. The CCW meeting of experts to be held 13-16 May is open to all nations regardless of whether they’ve joined the framework convention and its protocols. Many of the 21 countries that attended an International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) meeting on autonomous weapons systems in late March are expected to actively participate in the CCW experts meeting (Algeria, Brazil, China, Colombia, France, Germany, India, Israel, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Norway, Pakistan, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Switzerland, UK, and US). CCW meetings are also open to international and UN agencies, the ICRC, regional bodies, and registered non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Several NGOs in the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots have a long history of experience working within the CCW, including global coordinator Human Rights Watch.

What is the CCW meeting of experts and why does it matter?

On 15 November 2013, nations attending the annual CCW meeting agreed to begin working on killer robots when they adopted a report committing to hold a meeting of experts in May 2014 to consider questions relating to the emerging technology of “lethal autonomous weapons systems.” The decision was taken by consensus, which is seen as a rare feat in today’s disarmament diplomacy. The CCW mandate has vaulted the challenge of dealing with killer robots to the top rank of traditional multilateral arms control and humanitarian disarmament, validating the importance and urgency of the issue and undercutting arguments that these weapons are “inevitable” and “nothing to worry about.” The CCW meeting of experts is the first multilateral meeting on the matter, but it is unlikely to be the last. Campaigners believe that the agreement to work on the matter could lead to a new international law prohibiting fully autonomous weapons.

What is expected to happen at the experts meeting?

During the opening the chair will provide introductory remarks and there will be a general exchange of views where nations and other delegations can make brief statements. The [provisional agenda](#) follows the broad technical, ethical, legal, and operational parameters of the emerging international debate over these weapons with expert presentations aimed at stimulating discussion and interventions. At the conclusion of the meeting, the chair will present a draft report on the meeting and seek input on the way forward. The next annual CCW meeting on 14 November 2014 may see nations renew the mandate to continue the experts' discussions or move to a different phase of a more formal negotiating process.

What are the main arguments expected during the experts meeting?

The first session focuses on technical challenges opens with a debate between roboticists Professor Noel Sharkey, chair of the International Committee for Robot Arms Control (ICRAC), and Professor Ron Arkin from Georgia Tech. Prof. Sharkey has long expressed concern that autonomous weapons systems cannot be guaranteed to predictably comply with international law and stresses that the weapons must remain under human control. ICRAC is a co-founder of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, which seeks a preemptive ban. Prof. Arkin, on the other hand, has argued for the development of an "ethical governor" software to ensure "ethical adherence" by autonomous systems capable of lethal action in narrowly-bounded circumstances.

During the legal session, the Campaign and others will make the case that fully autonomous weapons are unlikely to be able to comply with international humanitarian law and that a preemptive ban is needed. They will urge nations to invoke the Martens Clause, which requires that states take evolving public perspectives into account when determining whether weapons such as killer robots can meet the "dictates of public conscience" and the "principles of humanity." Others are expected to argue that international law is sufficient to address concerns expressed over fully autonomous weapons and no new rules are needed.

It is not clear what the main issues will be in the session on ethical and sociology concerns or in the final session on operational and military aspects. Another campaign representative, Dr. Peter Asaro of ICRAC, will make the session on ethical considerations.

How are countries likely to contribute to the experts meeting?

Ambassador Jean-Hugues Simon-Michel of France is chairing the CCW meeting of experts and has recruited Brazil and Germany to serve as "friends of the chair" to chair respectively the sessions on ethical and societal concerns and technical issues. According to the [provisional agenda](#) (22 April), military and technical experts from France, Japan, US, and elsewhere will provide presentations. At least 44 nations have [made statements](#) on this subject, but few have used those opportunities to discuss their own policy and practice in any detail. The CCW process should spur governments to acknowledge their practice on fully autonomous weapons and develop policy aimed at regulating or banning the weapons. Poland's Ambassador Remigiusz A. Henczel will chair the next annual CCW meeting, where on 14 November 2014 nations will take a decision on whether to continue the work on killer robots.

Who is attending the experts meeting from the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots?

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots [delegation](#) to the CCW meeting of experts is comprised 40 campaigners from 12 member NGOs in countries including Austria, Canada, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Switzerland, UK, and US. Hi-level representatives include Nobel Peace laureate Ms. Jody Williams, former UN disarmament chief Ambassador Jayantha

Dhanapala of Pugwash, and Ms. Yukie Osa, the president of Association for Aid and Relief Japan, the country's largest humanitarian and disaster relief organization. As with the precedent set by previous CCW discussions and negotiations on other issues, the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots will take its seat at the table at every CCW session, as well as make statements, circulate documents, and host side events.

Where are the women at the experts meeting?

The [provisional agenda](#) of the CCW meeting of experts does not list any women to present on or chair any sessions. The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots has offered its female experts, which comprise half of the global coalition's 40-person delegation to the CCW meeting, including [side event](#) presenters:

- Ms. Bonnie Docherty of Human Rights Watch and Harvard Law School's International Human Rights Clinic, author of the new report *Shaking the Foundations* and author of the 2012 *Losing Humanity* report that has been widely credited with initiating the international debate on this topic.
- Dr. Heather Roff from ICRC, an expert at the University of Denver on ethics relating to emerging military technologies who also serves as a research fellow at the Eisenhower Center for Space and Defense Studies at the United States Air Force Academy.
- Ms. Maya Brehm of UK-based NGO [Article 36](#), a co-founder of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, who is also a researcher in weapons law at the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights.
- Ms. Miriam Struyk, program director for security and disarmament at [PAX](#) (formerly IKV Pax Christi), a co-founder of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots that produced the campaign's first [animated short film](#), the 2014 report [Deadly Decisions](#) on fully autonomous weapons, and who is leading an interfaith initiative to collect statements of support.
- Professor Charli Carpenter from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, who conducted the first public opinion polling in 2013 on US views on killer robots.
- Ms. Jody Williams 1997 Nobel Peace laureate and chair of the Nobel Women's Initiative. Williams has collected signatures from 20 Nobel Peace laureates for a statement on killer robots to be issued on Monday, May 12.

What about the Human Rights Council?

Professor Christof Heyns will present at the CCW meeting of experts on behalf of the University of Pretoria. In his capacity as UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Heyns authored the [2013 report](#) for the Human Rights Council that called on all nations enact an immediate moratorium on "lethal autonomous robots" until the international framework can be resolved. The report also urged that the High Commissioner for Human Rights convene a high-level panel of experts to look at the matter and report within a year to "propose a framework to enable the international community to address effectively the legal and policy issues." Prof. Heyns is scheduled to address the Human Rights Council during the week of 9 June 2014, on these and other recommendations. As yet, no nation has proposed specific action on fully autonomous weapons in the Human Rights Council.

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