



CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS

14 January 2015

Ambassador Michael Biontino
Permanent Representative of Germany to the Conference on Disarmament
28c, Chemin du Petit-Saconnex
CH-1209 Geneva
SWITZERLAND

Via email: l-cd@genf.auswaertiges-amt.de

Dear Ambassador Biontino,

I am writing on behalf of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots to thank you for agreeing to chair the meeting of experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems to be held by the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) on 13-17 April 2015. Our global coalition of non-governmental organizations stands ready to contribute substantively to your efforts this year.

As chair of the 2015 experts meeting we urge you to encourage all delegations to come prepared to contribute substantively, including by providing information on national policy measures on autonomous weapons systems, as well as their experiences with current weapons systems that detect or select and engage targets. We also hope that you can encourage all delegations to propose relevant experts for the meeting, particularly women and experts from outside of North America and Europe. This list of relevant women experts may be of interest:
<http://bit.ly/1x00YdD>

We received your 6 January letter and agree on the need to build on and deepen the discussions from the 2014 meeting. This letter provides our input on preparations for the 2015 meeting, including suggestions of relevant experts to invite to ensure a more diverse line-up of expert presenters.

Meaningful human control

As the chair's report of the 2014 meeting stated, many delegations have expressed interest in further considering meaningful human control. Since this was perhaps the most intensively discussed issue, we propose that the concept of meaningful human control be built in across the agenda of the 2015 meeting as a cross-cutting issue to be addressed by every session.

A number of experts could speak to the concept of meaningful human control, including Mr. Richard Moyes (UK) and Ms. Maya Brehm (Switzerland) of Article 36, and Ms. Kirsten Vignard (US) of UNIDIR.

Societal aspects

The 2014 experts meeting was divided into sessions addressing technical, legal, ethical, and operational questions relating to the emerging technology of autonomous weapons systems. In our view, the 2014 meeting did not specifically address the societal aspects of autonomous weapons systems flagged by the European Union, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and others.

Related to societal aspects are the broader implications for international peace and security, which the next meeting cannot afford to ignore. The chair's report of the 2014 meeting identified the key question of "whether the weapons could change the threshold of use of force." Austria, for example, has proposed looking at "the consequences on international peace and security," while India has urged that the weapons be assessed from the viewpoint of "their impact on international security."

Relevant experts who could address societal concerns raised by autonomous weapons, including impact on international peace and security, include Ms. Jody Williams (US), Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala (Sri Lanka) and Nobel Peace Laureates who signed a [joint statement](#) on killer robots issued in May 2014, as well as Dr. Jürgen Altman (Germany) of ICRAC.

Ethical matters

The brief session on ethics at the 2014 meeting saw strong and positive engagement by states. The key ethical question of delegating the right to decide on life and death to a machine should be central and we also urge that the notion of meaningful human control be considered from the ethical standpoint.

Relevant experts who could address ethical aspects include the co-founder of the Open Roboethics Initiative Ms. AJung Moon (Canada), Dr. Peter Asaro of ICRAC, and also Ms. Miriam Struyk (Netherlands) of PAX, who collected signatures from more than 70 faith leaders of various denominations on a November 2014 declaration urging action to address autonomous weapons systems.

Technical aspects

The 2014 meeting helped introduce the nature of the technology involved in autonomous weapons systems. Discussion of existing systems with various kinds of human control would help inform the meeting of the control that is already in place or needed to ensure there is always meaningful human control. Reframing autonomy in terms of human control makes the control process more transparent and helps extract the important issues under international law.

Further discussion is required on the unpredictability of autonomous systems operating in complex environments and the matter of how complex combat algorithms produced for different militaries, particularly for swarm robots, would interact on the battlefield.

Relevant experts who could speak to technical aspects include co-founder of Clearpath Robotics Mr. Ryan Gariepy (Canada), Prof. Noel Sharkey (UK) of ICRAC, and Dr. Lucy Suchman

(Canada/UK) of ICRC, a professor of anthropology of science and technology at Lancaster University.

Legal considerations

The 2014 experts meeting lacked variety in the views presented on the questions of whether fully autonomous weapons would comply with rules of international law and whether existing law is adequate. Further consideration is needed, including on accountability and responsibility.

Relevant legal experts include Ms. Bonnie Docherty of Harvard Law School (US), Ms. Sarah Knuckey (Australia) of Columbia Law School, and Dr. Milena Costas Trascasas (Switzerland) from the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights. We also recommend that Prof. Christof Heyns (South Africa) of the University of Pretoria be invited to speak.

Operational matters

The 2014 meeting looked at risks associated with lethal autonomous weapons systems and their use during military operations. Such risks should be considered further, including interoperability between different systems and what happens when connectivity and communication is degraded in warfare and other domains.

Relevant operational experts include Dr. Heather Roff (US) at the University of Denver.

Beyond the thematic divisions from the previous meeting, particular consideration could also be given to national-level weapons reviews, including obligations under article 36 of Additional Protocol I (1977) to the 1949 Geneva Conventions. It could also be helpful to look specifically at CCW Protocol IV on blinding lasers, which has been cited by many as a useful precedent for addressing concerns raised over new and emerging technologies.

Our campaign welcomes the opportunity to meet with you and your team at the earliest possible opportunity to discuss the 2015 experts meeting and the how we can complement and contribute to your work as chair. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



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