



# CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS

## **Statement to the Convention on Conventional Weapons Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems**

UN Geneva  
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Delivered by Mary Wareham, Human Rights Watch  
On behalf of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots

Thank you Mr. Chair. We sincerely appreciate all the work that you and your team and the CCW implementation support unit have done in preparing for this meeting. We are grateful to states for the preparation you have undertaken for this meeting, including the working papers available from the CCW website. We also appreciate the preparation and new reports that we have seen for this meeting from UNIDIR, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the SIPRI.

You will hear in a minute from some of our member organizations of the [Campaign to Stop Killer Robots](#), but I wanted to make some remarks on behalf our global coalition established in October 2012 with the goal of preemptively banning fully autonomous weapons, known here at the Convention on Conventional Weapons as lethal autonomous weapons systems.

This is the first-ever meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts, but it is the fourth time since 2014 that states have met at the CCW to discuss “questions relating to the emerging technologies of lethal autonomous weapons systems.”

We hope by now that is clear our Campaign to Stop Killer Robots is not trying to stifle innovation in artificial intelligence, robotics or science more generally. We are not trying to prohibit autonomous systems in the civilian or military world.

Rather our concern is that technological advances are making it increasingly possible to design weapons systems that would target and attack without any meaningful human control.

We have heard many states affirm that lethal autonomous weapon systems “do not exist” and pledge not to acquire or develop them. Such commitments are welcome, but policy can expire, be overridden, and replaced. Therefore, we see an urgent need for national legislation and new international law to preemptively ban the development, production and use of fully autonomous weapons.

While the capabilities of future technology are uncertain, there are strong reasons to believe that fully autonomous weapons could never replicate the full range of inherently human characteristics necessary to comply with fundamental principles of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Existing

mechanisms for legal accountability are ill suited and inadequate to address the unlawful harm that fully autonomous weapons would be likely to cause.

As you have seen, thousands of experts from the artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics community are calling for a new treaty to prohibit weapons systems that lack meaningful human control. The [short film released this week](#) illustrates their strong concern over the potential for these weapons to proliferate and fall into the wrong hands.

And as you know, our 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. For us this is a moral “red line” that should never be crossed

After four years, we believe the time has come for states to make explicit where they draw the line in increasing autonomy in weapon systems and determine how to ensure the line into full autonomy is not crossed.

We urge you to dedicate significant time to holding substantive meeting to foster common understandings and lay the groundwork necessary to begin negotiations on a new international instrument.

Agree to a mandate at the next week’s Meeting of High Contracting Parties that that continues the Group of Governmental Experts. Require that it meet for at least four weeks in 2018, including during the first half of the year.

The Non-Aligned Movement has shown how more than 100 states now see an urgent need to move to negotiating new international law on lethal autonomous weapons systems. As Brazil noted, there is enough of a critical mass now to move to a more structured approach by developing a new legally binding instrument.

Dozens of states have now affirmed the need to retain human control over the selection of targets and use of force. As the Russian Federation found in its [working paper](#) for this meeting, “The overwhelming majority of States agree on the inadmissibility of loss of meaningful human control of such weapons systems.”

A total of [20 states now support the goal](#) of prohibiting lethal autonomous weapons systems and we welcome Iraq to this list this week. We call on all states that have not done so to articulate their support for a ban on lethal autonomous weapons systems. At minimum, explain your rationale if you cannot endorse this call at this time.

It’s time to get down to business and start negotiations now.

Thank you.

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