



CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS

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

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* AS DELIVERED *

By Mary Wareham, Human Rights Watch

I am pleased to be able to speak on behalf of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. This international coalition of 44 non-governmental organizations is active in 21 countries. We launched the campaign in April of this year.

Our campaign believes that human control over the use of violent force is essential to ensure the protection of civilians and to ensure compliance with international law. We seek a comprehensive and preemptive ban on weapons systems that would be able to select and attack targets without meaningful human intervention. These fully autonomous weapons or “lethal autonomous robots” must be prohibited through an international treaty, as well as through national laws and other measures.

The campaign shares the multiple moral, ethical, legal, policy, technical, proliferation, and other concerns over these weapons that the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Professor Christof Heyns, detailed in his report issued earlier this year. We urge all states to implement the report’s recommendations, including its call for an immediate moratorium on weapons systems that can select and engage targets without further human intervention.

Since Professor Heyns presented his report at the Human Rights Council in May, more than two dozen nations have, for the first time, given their views on fully autonomous weapons, including [Austria](#), [Egypt](#), [France](#), and [Pakistan](#) at the First Committee and today [Costa Rica](#), [Ecuador](#), [Greece](#), [Ireland](#), [Japan](#), [Netherlands](#), [Switzerland](#), [United Kingdom](#), the [United States](#), as well as [Pakistan](#) again.¹ All of the states that have spoken

¹ A total of 28 states have spoken publicly on fully autonomous weapons since the Human Rights Council debate was held on 30 May 2013: Algeria, Austria, Argentina, Belarus, Brazil, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Pakistan, Russia, Sierra Leone, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and the United States. Since May 2013, members of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots have received responses to their letters from the foreign ministers of Austria, Canada, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, and the UK.

have expressed interest and concern at the challenges posed by fully autonomous weapons. None have opposed discussing the topic further. Many of you have suggested urgent international talks to address these weapons. We welcome your statements. Your words matter to us. We urge all countries to consider and publicly articulate their policy on this new challenge.

We appreciate the work that France, as chair of the next meeting of the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW), has been doing to consult on the matter of adding fully autonomous weapons to the convention's program of work in 2014. It is clear that there is wide support for a mandate to discuss this topic in the CCW.

The campaign supports any action to urgently address fully autonomous weapons in any forum. We welcome the prospect of work in the Convention on Conventional Weapons. The CCW's protocol banning blinding lasers is a pertinent example of a weapon being preemptively banned before it was ever developed or used. The CCW is also a forum that allows for meaningful engagement by civil society in accordance with the precedent set by its previous work.

We urge states to adopt a broad CCW mandate that considers international humanitarian and human rights law as well as accountability, proliferation and the other concerns. The fundamental question must be addressed of whether it is inherently wrong to let autonomous machines decide who and when to kill.

Any CCW mandate on fully autonomous weapons must also be underpinned by a clear sense of urgency and purpose.

As Professor Heyns said in his report, we must reinforce the international legal framework "against the pressure of the future ... while it is still possible." Your action is needed now to prevent this method of warfare from ever coming into existence.

Thank you.