



CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS

Campaign to Stop Killer Robots statement by Mary Wareham, HRW

to the Convention on Conventional Weapons meeting of experts

Geneva, Switzerland

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General Exchange of Views

I am pleased to speak in my capacity as coordinator of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, the international coalition of 51 non-governmental organizations in 24 countries. To ensure there is always human control over targeting and attack decisions we call for a pre-emptive ban on the development, production, and use of fully autonomous weapons, also described at this meeting as ‘lethal autonomous weapons systems.’

We are excited that the Convention on Conventional Weapons is beginning to look at the many questions that have been raised over this emerging technology. We thank you Ambassador Simon-Michel and your team for the work that you put into securing the mandate last November and for the efforts that you’ve made to prepare the agenda and line-up of expert presenters for this CCW meeting of experts.

Our global coalition includes women and men with knowledge and experience in the technical, legal, ethical, operational, and other aspects of fully autonomous weapons. We are pleased that two of our experts will be addressing the plenary this week and invite all delegates to attend our daily side events where you can hear from more of our delegates. Members of our campaign have produced new research and resources for this meeting that we would be happy to discuss.

As much as we look forward to hearing the expert presentations this week, we’re even more keen to hear from the governments in attendance. Over the past year, more than 40 nations have spoken on killer robots to acknowledge the concerns raised and express interest in discussing this challenge within the framework of the CCW and elsewhere. Yet only two—the US and UK—have publicly explained their policy and practice on fully autonomous weapons.

This debate is relevant for all countries, not only the handful developing and using robotic systems with various degrees of autonomy and lethality. All nations should be concerned at the prospect of allowing weapons that, once activated, would select and engage targets without meaningful human control.

We realize that this four-day meeting cannot even begin to resolve the many concerns over fully autonomous weapons, but it's a good place to start. The CCW can consider the state of technology and take a serious look at what constitutes "meaningful" human control over targeting and attack decisions. It can consider the merits of existing international law and look at best practices, but also the logical place to consider if new legally-binding rules are needed as we believe they are.

Our expectation is that this week of discussions will lead on to a decision at the annual meeting in November to do expanded work in a more formal Group of Governmental Experts with a view to negotiations. Our global coalition desires to see nations collectively succeed on this challenge by establishing new international law via the CCW.

The world needs your leadership and expertise now to ensure that human control of targeting and attack decisions is never ceded to machines.

Thank you.

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