



# **CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS**

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)**

19 March 2015

### **Convention on Conventional Weapons second experts meeting on lethal autonomous weapons systems**

UN Geneva  
13-17 April 2015

#### **What is the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW)?**

A total of 120 nations are ‘high contracting’ or state parties to the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW), including all five permanent members of the UN Security Council.<sup>1</sup> This framework convention adopted in 1980 contains five separate protocols on various weapons and explosive remnants of war, including Protocol IV which preemptively banned blinding lasers before they were fielded or used and as such provides a relevant precedent for work to address 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.

#### **Why is the CCW addressing killer robots?**

After the matter of “lethal autonomous robots” was first raised at the Human Rights Council in May 2013, nations agreed in November 2013 to a Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) discussion mandate on questions relating to the emerging technology of “lethal autonomous weapons systems.” The decision was taken by consensus—a rare feat in today’s disarmament diplomacy—and came less than one year after non-governmental organizations created the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots calling for a preemptive ban on fully autonomous weapons. The CCW’s first “informal meeting of experts” held in May 2014 attracted strong interest. States again agreed by consensus in November 2014 to continue the CCW deliberations on killer robots with another meeting on 13-17 April 2015.

According to the annotated programme of work the 2015 CCW experts meeting will focus on technical aspects including key characteristics as well as legal aspects and

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<sup>1</sup> The formal title is the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. Palestine and Grenada are the most recent countries to ratify the Convention on Conventional Weapons, in January 2015 and December 2014 respectively. The list of 120 state parties and five signatories to the CCW is available here: <http://bit.ly/1h6X6jB>

overarching issues such as ethics and human rights. A “food for thought” [working paper](#) by the chair details key questions for delegations to address at the meeting.

### **What does the campaign want the CCW to do on killer robots?**

Campaigners believe that the CCW’s agreement to consider the matter could lead to a new international law prohibiting fully autonomous weapons. The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots supports continued CCW talks on autonomous weapons systems, but stresses that a long, drawn-out process that achieves a weak or no result must be avoided. The campaign urges a more ambitious mandate aimed at achieving an outcome, with more time set aside for substantive deliberations than just one week in the course of an entire year. The campaign have also called for the 2015 meeting to be genuinely inclusive, especially with the participation of women experts.

Outside of the CCW process, the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots calls on all nations to:

- Implement the 2013 call by the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions for a moratorium on fully autonomous weapons until new international law is achieved.
- Develop and articulate national policy on fully autonomous weapons in consultation with relevant actors, including civil society. Articulate other ways that these weapons can be addressed at the international, regional, and national levels and become a champion of the ban call.

### **What happened at the first CCW meeting in May 2014?**

The 2014 experts meeting attracted representatives from 87 nations in addition to UN agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. During the meeting a few states delivered vague statements that appeared to seek to leave the door open for future technologies, but none openly said they are pursuing the development of fully autonomous weapons. No country vigorously defended or argued for the weapons although Czech Republic and Israel each spoke on the desirability of such systems. There was not outcome document, but the meeting chair, Ambassador Jean-Hugues Simon-Michel of France, provided a report in his capacity as chair, which noted the strong interest expressed in continuing the deliberations.

### **What will happen at the 2015 CCW meeting on killer robots?**

A similar number of states are expected to participate in the 2015 meeting as attended the first meeting in 2014, including all UN Security Council members. The main focus of attention will be the plenary sessions, which run in the morning (10:00-13:00) and afternoon (15:00-18:00) throughout the week. The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots is holding three side event briefings (13:00-14:30) to present civil society views and make the case for a preemptive ban on development, production, and use of fully autonomous weapons.

According to the [annotated programme of work](#) issued in early March, the meeting will open on Monday, 13 April with a general exchange of views for delegations to highlight questions from the first meeting held in 2014 and share their positions on the

development of national policy and legal provisions as well as “expectations regarding the international debate.”

Deliberations on technical issues are scheduled to take up the first two days of the 2015 meeting followed by a half day on legal aspects, and a day on “overarching issues” including ethical, social, and human rights issues. Start times for the sequence of topics outlined in the programme of work could change as the week progresses.

The technical sessions begins on Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning with a review of the state of play on research and development of autonomous weapons systems as well as an exchange on the military rationale for autonomous functions in weapons systems. Artificial intelligence expert Professor Stuart Russell has agreed to speak on increasingly autonomous and complex functions and their use in weapon systems, now and in the future.

The technical deliberations then turn on Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday morning to focus on “characteristics” or “elements” that can help to establish a common understanding of the defining aspects of concern for lethal autonomous weapons systems. Ms. Maya Brehm of Article 36, a campaign co-founder, will speak on the concept of “meaningful human control” of autonomous warfare.

Legal aspects are considered Wednesday afternoon in a session on “possible challenges to international humanitarian law due to increasing degrees of autonomy.”

On Thursday, the so-called overarching issues are considered with a discussion list that includes ethical and social issues, human rights law issues, and “general security issues.” Ms. Bonnie Docherty of Human Rights Watch, a campaign co-founder, will speak on the human rights implications of autonomous weapons systems, including the basic tenants of the right to life, principle of humanity, and dictates of the public conscience or Marten’s Clause. An exploratory discussion on security will seek to address strategic and regional stability, relevance for asymmetric contexts and the risks of proliferation.

Friday morning will see a general exchange of views by delegations on areas for common ground following the week of deliberations in addition to the “framework for future debate.” Delegations are requested to provide their views on possible common ground on elements for a ban, restrictions, regulations, and code of conduct as well as on transparency. They should indicate their support for a continuation of a more ambitious CCW process.

### **What’s the outcome of the 2015 CCW meeting?**

At the conclusion of the meeting, the chair will present a draft report on the meeting and seek input on the way forward. At the next annual CCW meeting on 13 November 2015 nations may renew the mandate to continue the experts’ discussions, possibly moving to a different phase of a more formal negotiating process.

## **How are countries contributing at the 2015 meeting?**

In December 2014, current CCW president Ambassador Remigiusz A. Henczel of Poland appointed Ambassador Michael Biontino of Germany to chair the 2015 CCW meeting on killer robots. Ambassador Biontino will likely recruit representatives to serve as “friends of the chair” for the various sessions, such as Ambassador Simon-Michel of France, who chaired the first CCW meeting on lethal autonomous weapons systems.

Sri Lanka’s Ambassador Ravinath Aryasinha from the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) group will preside over the next annual CCW meeting, where on 13 November 2015 nations will take a decision on whether to continue deliberations on killer robots in 2016.

At least 52 nations have made statements on this subject, but few to date have used those opportunities to discuss their own policy and practice in any detail, as the campaign’s separate compilation of country positions shows.

## **Who will participate from the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots?**

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots delegation to the CCW meeting of experts is comprised 45 campaigners from 13 member NGOs in countries including Canada, Colombia, Egypt, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, UK, and US. It includes key spokespersons Nobel Peace Laureate Ms. Jody Williams and roboticist Noel Sharkey. Following the precedent set by previous CCW meetings, 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. See our Delegation List. The List of Side Events contains biographies of campaigners.

## **Where are the women at the 2015 meeting?**

The 2014 CCW meeting did not include any women experts as presenters or speakers in the meeting so the 2015 meeting is already a success with a speaker line-up featuring experts Docherty and Brehm as well as Sarah Knuckey, and Heather Roff. Women comprise half of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots delegation to the CCW meeting, including side event speakers.

## **What about the Human Rights Council?**

Prof. Christof Heyns, the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, issued a 2013 report for the Human Rights Council that called on all states to adopt a national moratorium on fully autonomous weapons until new international law. In 2014, he urged the Human Rights Council to “remain seized” with the issue of autonomous weapons systems and “make its voice heard as the international debate unfolds.”

Nations have yet to propose a specific action in the Human Rights Council to address fully autonomous weapons, but several note the council’s relevance for the emerging international debate over fully autonomous weapons, including Austria, Ireland, and South Africa. Austria described the 2014 deliberations on killer robots in the Council and CCW in 2014 as “important and complementary” and urged the matter “be treated with a sense of urgency in the relevant UN fora on the basis of a multidisciplinary approach.” In

November 2014, Holy See has described autonomous weapons as “a matter of great importance” that is “larger than the scope of the CCW.”

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