



CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS

PRESS RELEASE

Fragile diplomatic talks on killer robots limp forward Public pressure is essential to nations retaining human control over the use of force

(Geneva, 26 November 2018) Reflecting the fragile nature of multilateralism today, states have agreed to continue their diplomatic talks on lethal autonomous weapons systems—killer robots—next year, but with no clear objective and even less time dedicated. The poor outcome at the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) annual meeting—which concluded at 11:55pm on Friday—demonstrates the weakness of the forum’s decision-making process, which enables a single state or small group of states to thwart more ambitious measures sought by a majority of states.

Killer robots are weapons systems that would select and attack targets without meaningful human control. “We’re dismayed that states could not agree on a more ambitious mandate aimed at negotiating a treaty to prevent the development of fully autonomous weapons,” said Mary Wareham of Human Rights Watch, coordinator of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. “This weak outcome underscores the urgent need for bold political leadership and for consideration of another route to create a new treaty to ban these weapons systems, which would select and attack targets without meaningful human control. The security of the world and future of humanity hinges on achieving a preemptive ban on killer robots.”

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots urges all states to [heed the call](#) of the UN Secretary-General and prohibit these weapons, which he has deemed “politically unacceptable and morally repugnant.”

Since the first CCW meeting on killer robots in 2014, most of the participating states have found that current international humanitarian and human rights law will need to be strengthened to prevent the development, production, and use of fully autonomous weapons. This includes [28 states seeking to prohibit fully autonomous weapons](#). El Salvador and Morocco added their names to the list of ban states last week. Austria, Brazil, and Chile have formally [proposed](#) the urgent negotiation of “a legally-binding instrument to ensure meaningful human control over the critical functions” of weapons systems.

None of the 88 states participating in the CCW meeting objected to continuing the formal discussions on lethal autonomous weapons systems. However, Russia alone was able to successfully reduce the amount of time states will meet in 2019 to discuss the killer robots from

just 10 days to a pitiful 7 days. This is less than the bare minimum of time necessary for the CCW to remain credible when it comes to tackling this challenge.

Russia, as well as Israel, Australia, South Korea, and the United States have indicated they cannot support negotiation of a new treaty via the CCW or any other process.

It is increasingly obvious that public concerns are mounting at the prospect of weapons systems that, once activated, would select and attack targets without further human intervention. For the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, the fact the CCW talks on killer robots will proceed next year is no guarantee of a meaningful outcome.

“It seems ever more likely that concerned states will consider other avenues to create a new international treaty to prohibit fully autonomous weapons,” said Wareham. “The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots stands ready to work to secure a new treaty through any means possible.”

Past failures by the CCW to stem human suffering caused by antipersonnel landmines and cluster munitions resulted in external diplomatic process that delivered life-saving ban treaties. The inability of nuclear weapons states to disarm led states to create the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons via the UN General Assembly. Those treaties were all the result of genuine partnerships between like-minded states, UN agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and dedicated coalitions of non-governmental organizations.

The CCW meeting approved Mr. Ljupco Jivan Gjorgjinski of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to chair next year’s CCW’s deliberations on lethal autonomous weapons systems, which will be divided into two meetings: 25-29 March and 20-21 August. The CCW’s annual meeting, at which decisions will be made about future work on autonomous weapons will be held on 13-15 November.

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots is [a rapidly growing coalition of 87 non-governmental organizations in 49 countries](#) working to preemptively ban fully autonomous weapons. More than 40 campaigners [participated in the CCW meeting](#) from countries including Canada, Cameroon, Chile, Colombia, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, Pakistan, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, UK, and US. This week the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots will launch a new website with more visual content and translated materials.

“Over the coming year our dynamic campaigners around the world are intensifying their outreach at the national and regional levels,” said Wareham. “We encourage anyone concerned by the disturbing trend towards killer robots to express their strong desire for their government to endorse and work for a ban on fully autonomous weapons without delay. Only with the public’s support will the ban movement prevail.”

For more information, please contact:

- Clare Conboy, Media consultant, at Tel./WhatsApp. +44 (7507) 415-987 and media@stopkillerrobots.org
- Mary Wareham, Campaign coordinator at Tel./WhatsApp. +1 (646) 203-8292 and wareham@hrw.org

For more information, see:

- Website: www.stopkillerrobots.org
- Twitter: [@BanKillerRobots](https://twitter.com/BanKillerRobots)
- Facebook: [@stopkillerrobots](https://www.facebook.com/stopkillerrobots)
- Instagram: [stopkillerrobots](https://www.instagram.com/stopkillerrobots)