



# CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS

22 February 2019

António Guterres  
Secretary-General  
United Nations  
S-3800, United Nations Secretariat Building  
New York, NY 10017

RE: Banning fully autonomous weapons in 2019

Dear Secretary-General,

I am writing on behalf of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots to sincerely thank you for your call to prohibit lethal autonomous weapons systems, also known as fully autonomous weapons or “killer robots.” In addition, we would like to suggest cooperating on a joint event towards this objective together with artificial intelligence (AI) experts during the 74<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly’s First Committee on Disarmament and International Security in October 2019.

Secretary-General, the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots warmly welcomes your call last November at [the Paris Peace Forum](#) and at [the Web Summit in Portugal](#) urging states to create a new treaty to prohibit fully autonomous weapons. We strongly concur that the prospect of machines with the discretion and power to take human life is morally repugnant and politically unacceptable.

We also warmly welcome your [Agenda for Disarmament](#), especially its careful review of the many serious ethical, legal operational, technical and other concerns raised by fully autonomous weapons. We appreciate the timely offer that you have made to support states to create a legally binding instrument with the goal of ensuring that “humans remain at all times in control over the use of force.”

Support for a ban on fully autonomous weapons continues to increase. Last year, El Salvador and Morocco added their names to the list of [28 countries supporting the call to ban fully autonomous weapons](#). Austria, Brazil, and Chile [formally proposed](#) the urgent negotiation of “a legally-binding instrument to ensure meaningful human control over the critical functions” of weapons systems.

Last September, 566 Members of the European Parliament voted in favor of [Resolution 2018/275](#), demanding the start of “international negotiations on a legally binding instrument prohibiting lethal autonomous weapons systems.” A provisional agreement reached this week [would prohibit](#)

the new European Defence Fund (EDF) from investing in the development of lethal autonomous weapons systems.

Public opposition to such weapons is increasing. Last month, [market research company Ipsos](#) issued the results of a 26-country poll conducted in December 2018 that found 61% of respondents oppose lethal autonomous weapons systems, while 22 percent support such use and 17 percent said they were not sure. In a near-identical [survey in 23 countries](#) by the same company in January 2017, 56 percent were opposed, 24 percent not opposed, and 19 percent unsure.

Private sector actors are also taking steps to prevent the development of fully autonomous weapons, and several technology experts and workers have joined the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots over the past year. Last June, Google issued [a set of ethical principles](#), including a commitment not to “design or deploy” artificial intelligence for use in weapons.

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, which Human Rights Watch coordinates, is rapidly growing as public concerns mount. The coalition is now comprised of [93 nongovernmental organizations in 53 countries](#). The campaign has launched [a new website](#) to replace the one used since its inception in 2013.

Last November’s annual meeting of the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) in Geneva agreed to continue diplomatic talks on killer robots with no clear objective or timetable for negotiating a treaty. To our campaign, this showed that a new avenue is urgently needed to prohibit fully autonomous weapons before they become operational.

Past CCW failures to stem human suffering caused by antipersonnel landmines and cluster munitions resulted in external diplomatic processes that delivered life-saving treaties to ban the weapons. The lack of agreement among nuclear weapons states to disarm led other countries to create the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons via the UN General Assembly.

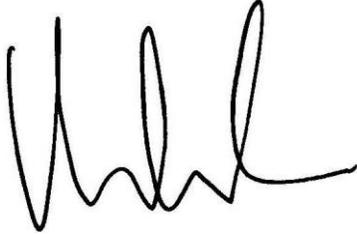
As you know, those humanitarian disarmament treaties were all the result of genuine partnerships between like-minded countries, UN agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and dedicated coalitions of nongovernmental organizations.

While the optimal pathway forward to a treaty banning fully autonomous weapons has yet to be determined, the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots is scaling up its outreach at the national level to increase awareness of this challenge and encourage political support for the goal of prohibiting fully autonomous weapons. We are also engaging with officials and government representatives at the African Union and other regional fora with the aim of fostering regional support for launching negotiations on a new treaty to prohibit killer robots.

To increase awareness among states and officials at the UN in New York, the campaign has convened a side event briefing every year since 2013, during UNGA First Committee on Disarmament and International Security. This year, we would like to hold a special event with you, renowned artificial intelligence experts and high-level campaigners to discuss concerns raised by fully autonomous weapons and the urgent need to launch negotiations on a new ban treaty.

We would welcome your participation in this event and would be happy to discuss this proposal further with your officials.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary Wareham', with a stylized, cursive script.

Mary Wareham  
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CC:

Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs