



CAMPAIGN TO **STOP** KILLER ROBOTS

Intervention by the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots delivered by Mary Wareham, Human Rights Watch

Multi-stakeholder consultation by the chair of the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW)
Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems
Geneva
15 August 2019

Mr. Chair, I am speaking on behalf of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, but should note that next week we will have a delegation of 45 people from 20 non-governmental organizations in 19 countries.

We are grateful to you for holding these informal consultations and for your dedicated work preparing the draft “conclusions and recommendations” non-paper. We recognize and appreciate the effort that has gone into drafting a product that caters to the diversity of views that is evident in this Group of Governmental Experts (GGE).

However, the proposed measures contained in the draft non-paper are inadequate and insufficient. They do not reflect the will of the majority to create new international law on this issue.

Mr. Chair, it is increasingly clear that these CCW talks on fully autonomous weapons have become more technical and less values-based since they were formalized by the Fourth Review Conference in 2016.

We’re worried that the CCW is no longer looking at key concerns such as ethics and morality, potential humanitarian impact, and human rights. It is instead prioritizing consideration of traditional national security concerns—be they legal, military, technical—over broader ones affecting all of humanity.

We firmly agree with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) that a “human-centered approach” is needed here at the CCW. Look at how the phrase “human control” is gradually being written out of the CCW lexicon and replaced by weaker wordings of human judgment, human element, human machine interaction, human responsibility, and so on. To us, the concept of human control is stronger and necessary because it is clear and comprehensive, encompassing both judgment and actions.

We are disappointed, but not surprised that the best proposal the CCW can muster after all this time is recommend the 2021 Review Conference develop a “normative framework” on emerging

technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems. The reference to a “normative framework” is ambiguous. Would this be a legally-binding instrument or another type of product?

The proposed mandate is unambitious as it seeks to lock in the multilateral consideration of the killer robots concerns into two more years of CCW talk but not action.

As you know, we regard more guiding principles and other measures that fall short of new international law as completely insufficient to prevent fully autonomous weapons.

This is why we seek clear, binding rules to help stigmatize problematic weapons technology and influence all actors, including states not party and non-state actors, and reinforce and clarify existing international law. A ban treaty is imperative to retain meaningful human control over the use of force, specifically over the critical functions of selecting and engaging targets.

If the CCW is deemed the appropriate framework for dealing with lethal autonomous weapons systems—as states here insist it is—then the *only* path forward is for states to launch negotiations on a new ban protocol or treaty. We’re not convinced that will be possible here at the CCW so we’re looking closely at the UN General Assembly and other avenues to pursue the negotiation of a new treaty.

Enshrining the principle of meaningful human control over the use of force requires both prohibitions and positive obligations to ensure that these weapons systems do not undermine ethical values.

Mr. Chair, before closing, I want to provide a couple of examples of the support that has been building towards the goal of prohibiting killer robots since the last informal consultation at the end of June.

Over the last year the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots coalition has nearly doubled in size, to a current total of 113 non-governmental organizations in 57 countries. As our numbers grow so does our ability to engage new endorsers and supporters. A growing number of [tech workers, AI experts](#) and companies support the call to ban killer robots.

The Campaign’s members are conducting research to deepen understandings and knowledge of the killer robots challenge. On Monday, 19 August, PAX, a Dutch co-founder of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, will release a new report investigating how tech companies are potentially contributing to the development of fully autonomous weapons.

Last month, the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots participated in the 24th World Scout Jamboree in West Virginia in the United States, a two-week event that brought together more than 42,000 scouts ages 14 to 17 years old from 150 countries. More than 1,400 Scouts participating in our workshops and thousands more passed through our exhibition, contributing their thoughts and ideas for future actions. Inspired by the young leaders we met at the Jamboree, the Campaign will continue gathering support from more than 50 million Scouts around the world and will

engage national and regional scout organizations in the period leading to next the Jamboree in South Korea in 2023.

We have more to say, but will conclude here as we wish to hear what states have to say about the way forward.