Report on Activities

Convention on Conventional Weapons Group of Governmental Experts meeting on lethal autonomous weapons systems

United Nations Geneva

27 – 31 August 2018
About this report

This report details activities by the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots at the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems held at the United Nations (UN) in Geneva on 27-31 August 2018.

The report records the campaign’s contributions, reviews the participation of governments in these meetings, and its annexes provide a summary of country views and the campaign’s delegation list.

Campaign coordinator Mary Wareham of Human Rights Watch prepared this report, drawing from statements posted online by the CCW implementation support unit and WILPF’s Reaching Critical Will Project. The report also draws on notes of the deliberations taken by Bonnie Docherty of Human Rights Watch and her Harvard Law School International Human Rights Clinic student Paras Shah.

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots is grateful for the generous donor support that enabled us to have a strong presence at the CCW meetings and to conduct outreach in the lead-up and afterwards.

This report is available on the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots website at: www.stopkillerrobots.org/publications.

Mary Wareham
Washington DC
9 January 2020
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I. Lead-up to the CCW meeting
At the CCW’s annual meeting in November 2017, states agreed to continue the work of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS) established in 2016 and approved Ambassador Amandeep Singh Gill of India to continue as GGE chair. Two GGE meetings on killer robots were scheduled for in 2018, on 9-13 April and 27-31 August.

There were several events and initiatives on killer robots in the period between the April and August 2018 GGE meetings.

At the national level, a group of lawmakers in Japan held a parliamentary seminar on killer robots on 17 April together with local NGOs and AI experts. In July in Belgium, a parliamentary defence committee approved a resolution urging the Belgian government to support international efforts to prohibit the use of fully autonomous weapons and ensure that the Belgian army will never use them.

In early June, Google published a set of ethical principles that included a pledge from the company to not develop artificial intelligence for use in weapons. Days earlier, the company said it would end its participation in a Department of Defense initiative called Project Maven after the contract expired at the end of 2018. In July, more than 200 technology companies and organizations from more than 36 countries signed on to a pledge released by the Future of Life Institute at the International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence in Stockholm, committing to “neither participate in nor support the development, manufacture, trade, or use of lethal autonomous weapons.”

In May, UN Secretary-General António Guterres issued his “Agenda for Disarmament,” flagging concerns over fully autonomous weapons and offering to support states to elaborate new measures including “legally binding arrangements” to ensure that “humans remain at all times in control over the use of force.”

In July, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling for the urgent negotiation of “an international ban on weapon systems that lack human control over the use of force.” The resolution called on the European Council to work towards such a ban and “urgently develop and adopt a common position on autonomous weapon systems.”

II. CCW meeting on killer robots, August 2018
This was the sixth CCW meeting on lethal autonomous weapons systems since 2014.\(^1\) A total of 90 countries participated in August 2018 GGE meeting on lethal autonomous weapons systems in addition to UN agencies such as the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs and UNMAS, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, and various academics. Unlike GGE meetings in other fora, the CCW GGE meetings are open to all interested states plus UN agencies, the ICRC, and registered NGOs.

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\(^1\) Previously, 84 states participated in the last CCW meeting on lethal autonomous weapons systems in April 2018, while 86 attended in November 2017, 94 attended in 2016, 90 in 2015, and 87 in 2014.
The chair’s agenda for the August GGE meeting continued on the agenda covered by the first meeting in 2018: a) a common understanding on concepts and characteristics relevant to the objectives and purposes of the Convention; b) consideration of the human element in the use of lethal force, c) potential military applications of related technologies and d) possible options for addressing the humanitarian and international security challenges posed by lethal autonomous weapons systems.

The chair encouraged states to prepare substantively for the meeting by submitting working papers in advance, of which seven were submitted. Austria, Brazil, and Chile made a joint proposal for the CCW to move to a mandate to negotiate a legally binding instrument. Estonia and Finland focused on technical perspectives, France, United Kingdom, and the United States each provided papers on human-machine interaction. Australia focused on the Article 36 legal reviews of weapons process. Brazil issued a paper entitled “Areas of Convergence on LAWS.”

The GGE meeting opened with a panel of experts discussing characteristics and was followed by a series of three-hour sessions on characteristics, human control, and the way forward. It concluded in the early hours of Saturday, 1 September after states adopted a report containing a set of non-binding principles and recommendations.

During the meeting, a clear majority of states proposed commencing negotiations in 2019 on a new treaty. Most of the 26 states that previously expressed support for a ban repeated that position during the meeting, including Colombia, Iraq, Pakistan, Panama, a group of African states and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) group of states. Austria, Brazil and Chile recommended the CCW “negotiate a legally-binding instrument to ensure meaningful human control over the critical functions” of weapons systems.2

Australia, Israel, Russia, South Korea, and the United States, however, rejected any move to negotiate a new treaty or other measures. They repeatedly noted potential benefits of autonomy in weapons systems.

Some states suggested the CCW focus on future deliberations on other measures, such as a political declaration floated by France and Germany to outline principles such as the necessity of human control in the use of force and the importance of human accountability. The Campaign expressed concern that measures short of new international law will simply not be enough to protect humanity from fully autonomous weapons.

The CCW states parties were tasked with making a recommendation on future work to the CCW's annual meeting in November. The final report notes that there was significant divergence with regard to the mandate of the CCW; some states proposed strengthening the mandate of the CCW while others maintained that the current mandate provides sufficient flexibility for

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2 A total of 26 states support the call to ban fully autonomous weapons: Algeria, Argentina, Austria, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Ghana, Guatemala, Holy See, Iraq, Mexico, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, State of Palestine, Uganda, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe.
discussions. The meeting recommended that the GGE continue in 2019 and meet for a total of ten days.

The final decision on future work of the GGE on LAWS will be taken at the CCW’s annual meeting on 23 November 2018.

III. Campaign Activities
The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots delegation to the August 2018 CCW meeting consisted of more than four dozen representatives from Australia, Belgium, Cameroon, Canada, Colombia, Egypt, Finland, France, Japan, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Russia, Spain, United Kingdom, and the United States (see Annex II).

During the August meeting, campaigners met with delegates from dozens of countries. The campaign convened a side event briefing on 28 August moderated by Maria-Pia Devoto of SEHLAC and focusing on “ethical concerns over fully autonomous weapons. The panel featured remarks and presentations from Nobel Peace Laureate Jody Williams, Bonnie Docherty of Human Rights Watch, Amr Gaber of the Tech Workers Coalition, Peter Asaro of the International Committee for Robot Arms Control, and Ariel Conn of the Future of Life Institute.

Human Rights Watch published a new report for distribution at the meeting, entitled *Heed the Call: A Moral and Legal Imperative to Ban Killer Robots*.

For more information, please see:
- CCW 2018 GGE website
- WILPF Reaching Critical Will 2018 CCW webpage
- Campaign to Stop Killer Robots website and Flickr site (photos)
- Campaign to Stop Killer Robots YouTube page
Annex I

Country Views on Killer Robots
31 August 2018

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots monitors the positions of countries on the call to ban fully autonomous weapons.

Who wants to ban killer robots?

Twenty-six countries are calling for a prohibition on fully autonomous weapons:

Alphabetical order

1. Algeria
2. Argentina
3. Austria
4. Bolivia
5. Brazil
6. Chile
7. China*
8. Colombia
9. Costa Rica
10. Cuba
11. Djibouti
12. Ecuador
13. Egypt
14. Ghana
15. Guatemala
16. Holy See
17. Iraq
18. Mexico
19. Nicaragua
20. Pakistan
21. Panama
22. Peru
23. State of Palestine
24. Uganda
25. Venezuela
26. Zimbabwe

Chronological order

1. Pakistan on 30 May 2013
2. Ecuador on 13 May 2014
3. Egypt on 13 May 2014
4. Holy See on 13 May 2014
5. Cuba on 16 May 2014
6. Ghana on 16 April 2015
7. Bolivia on 17 April 2015
8. State of Palestine on 13 November 2015
9. Zimbabwe on 12 November 2015
10. Algeria on 11 April 2016
11. Costa Rica on 11 April 2016
12. Mexico on 13 April 2016
13. Chile on 14 April 2016
15. Panama on 12 December 2016
16. Peru on 12 December 2016
17. Argentina on 12 December 2016
18. Venezuela on 13 December 2016
20. Brazil on 13 November 2017
21. Iraq on 13 November 2017
22. Uganda on 17 November 2017
23. Austria on 9 April 2018
24. China* on 13 April 2018
25. Djibouti on 13 April 2018
26. Colombia on 13 April 2018

* China states that its call is to ban the use of fully autonomous weapons, but not their development or production.

On 9 April 2018, a group of African states recommended concluding a legally binding instrument “at the earliest” and found that “fully autonomous weapons systems or LAWS that are not under human control should be banned.”

A March 2018 working paper by the Non-Aligned Movement calls for a “legally binding international instrument stipulating prohibitions and regulations on lethal autonomous weapons systems.” The campaign invites national statements affirming support for these objectives.
Annex II: Campaign Delegation List

Campaign Delegation

Convention on Conventional Weapons
Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems
United Nations Geneva
27-31 August 2018

Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, @bankillerrobots
Head of Delegation: Ms. Mary Wareham, @marywareham
Ms. Clare Conboy-Stephenson, @ClareConboy
Ms. Isabelle Jones, @issjones
Ms. Anne-Sophie Simpere, @asimpere
Mr. Amr Gaber, @amrtgaber

Amnesty International, @amnesty
Ms. Rasha Abdul Rahim, @rasha_abdul

Article 36, @article36
Mr. Richard Moyes, @rjmoyes
Ms. Maya Brehm, @schoggitaler

Association for Aid and Relief Japan, @aarjapan
Mr. Yuki Sakurai

Center for International Security and Policy (Kazakhstan), @cisp_astana
Mr. Alimzhan Akhmetov

Committee of 100 (Finland)
Ms. Minna Vähäsaalo

Facing Finance, @FacingFinance
Mr. Thomas Küchenmeister
Ms. Vanessa Müller

Human Rights Watch, @hrw
Mr. Steve Goose
Ms. Bonnie Docherty
Mr. Mark Hiznay
Mr. Paras Shah

International Committee for Robot Arms Control, @icracnet
Prof. Noel Sharkey, @NoelSharkey
Dr. Peter Asaro, @peterasaro
Dr. Thompson Chengeta, @DrThompsonLaw
Mr. Yeshua Moser-Puangsuwan, @yeshuamp
Dr. Elke Schwarz, @ElkeSchwarz
Prof. Lucy Suchman
Dr. Jutta Weber
Dr. Steve Wright
Dr. Amanda Sharkey

*Mines Action Canada, @MinesActionCan*
Mr. Paul Hannon, @PCHannon
Ms. Erin Hunt, @erinlynnhunt

*Nobel Women’s Initiative, @NobelWomen*
Ms. Jody Williams, @JodyWilliams97

*Norwegian Peace Association, @Fredslaget*
Ms. Lene Grimstad, @LeneGrimstad

*PAX, @PAXforpeace*
Ms. Miriam Struyk, @MiriamStruyk
Mr. Daan Kayser, @DaanKayser
Ms. Susanne Maria “Maaike” Beenes, @maaikebns
Mr. Michel Uiterwaal, @MichelUiterwaal

*Pax Christi Vlaanderen, @paxchristiVL*
Mr. Willem Staes, @willemstAES

*Protection*
Mr. Ayman Sorour, @aymansorour

*Project Ploughshares, @ploughshares_ca*
Ms. Branka Marijan, @brankamarijan

*Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, @PugwashConfs*
Dr. Linda Johanna Friman

*SafeGround, @SafeGroundInc*
Ms. Matilda Byrne

*SEHLAC, @SehlacOrg*
Mr. Camilo Serna
Ms. Maria Pia Devoto, @piadevoto

*Sri Lanka Campaign to Stop Killer Robots*
Prof. Yanitra Kumaraguru

*Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, @WILPF @RCW_
Ms. Ray Acheson, @achesonray
Ms. Allison Pytlak, @a_pytlak
Ms. Katrin Geyer, @kat_geyer
Ms. Sylvie Ndongmo, @sndongo2005, @WilpfCameroon

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Annex III: Media Coverage – August-October 2018

English - in chronological order


Casey Cipriani, “The Documentary 'Do You Trust This Computer?' Says We're Totally Unprepared For The Robot Apocalypse,” Bustle, 18 August 2018. https://www.bustle.com/p/the-documentary-do-you-trust-this-computer-says-were-totally-unprepared-for-the-robot-apocalypse-10227532


This article was re-printed in Salon, and The News Lens (Chinese)


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Harry Pettit, “Killer military robots will create a nightmare dystopia if they are allowed to kill at will, Amnesty International warn as they call on the UN to ban them,” Daily Mail, 27 August 2018. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-6102153/Killer-robots-BANNED-late-Amnesty-International-pleads-UN.html

Jasper Hamill, “UN meets to discuss the apocalyptic risk posed by ‘killer robots,’” Metro

Bonnie Docherty, “Why We Need A Pre-Emptive Ban On ‘Killer Robots,’” Huffington Post, 27 August 2018. [https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/killer-robots-uk_5b7d1171e4b0cd327df7ff8a?](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/killer-robots-uk_5b7d1171e4b0cd327df7ff8a?)


Nina Larson, “Ban killer robots ‘before it is too late’: Amnesty International activists criticize UN body for moving too slow,” Agence France-Presse, 28 August 2018. This AFP story was also published in Yahoo News, First Post, The Star, and The Nation.


“US, Russia Block Consensus at ‘Killer Robots’ Meeting: Group,” Associated Press, 4 September 2018. https://www.apnews.com/6d55ee85a9e74a26a4f8a92ca052d5b3

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Tom Vander Ark, “Curbing Killer Robots and Other Misuses Of AI,” Forbes, 1 October 2018. [Link]

David Rivers, “Killer robots capable of 'trigger happy rebellion' now battlefield ready,” Daily Star, 7 October 2018. [Link]

Peter Teffer, “AI experts tell MEPs ban on 'killer robots' is unrealistic,” EUobserver, 1 October 2018. [Link]


Other Languages

**Russian:**
[Links]

**German:**
[Links]
Verbot von Killerrobotern gefordert
Die Vereinten Nationen beraten über ein Verbot von Killer-Robotern.
Diplomaten ringen um Kontrolle: Krieg der Kampfmaschinen.
Sollen Killer-Roboter verboten werden?“
Kommentar: Killer-Roboter verbieten
Killerroboter industrialisieren das Tötens vollends.
Amnesty International fordert Verbot von Killerrobotern
Killerroboter: Amnesty International fordert Verbot
Streit um autonome Kriegsmaschinen
Was sind Killerroboter – und sollte man sie verbieten?
Konsens über Verbot von Killerrobotern nicht in Sicht
UN wollen Killer Roboter stoppen
Konsens über Verbot von Killerrobotern nicht in Sicht
TV Beitrag ARD
Schaflung autonomer Waffen nicht vollständig zu stoppen
UN-Verhandlungen über autonome Waffen
Konsens über Verbot von Killerrobotern nicht in Sicht
Schranken für Killer Roboter
Amnesty International fordert Verbot von Killerrobotern
Konsens über Verbot von Killerrobotern nicht in Sicht
UN-Streit in Genf: Entscheiden bald Killerroboter über Tod und Leben?
Abrüstungsexperten beraten über Schranken für Killerroboter
Nicht länger Science Fiction
Konsens über Verbot von Killerrobotern nicht in Sicht
Angst vor dem Killer-Roboter
Genfer Gespräche über autonome Waffensysteme
Töten nach Algorithmus
Autonome Waffen: Verhaltenskodex reicht nicht
Konsens über Verbot von Killerrobotern nicht in Sicht
Amnesty International für Verbot von Kampf-Roboter
Menschenrechtler für Verbot
Kampfmaschine, die alleine entscheiden
Killerroboter: Amnesty International fordert Verbot
UN Diskutiert über Killerroboter: Darf eine Maschine über Leben und Tod entscheiden?
Konsens über Verbot von Killerrobotern nicht in Sicht.
UN-Konferenz in Genf. Amnesty: Killerroboter verbieten
Abrüstungsexperten beraten über Schranken für Killerroboter
Konsens über Verbot von Killerrobotern nicht in Sicht
Die UN diskutieren über Killerroboter,
Wieder Streit über Killerroboter bei UN-Konferenz in Genf.
Radio
Abrüstungsexperten verhandeln Schranken für Killer-Roboter
Was sind Killerroboter - und sollte man sie verbieten?
Konsens über Verbot von Killerrobotern nicht in Sicht.
Konsens über Verbot von Killerrobotern nicht in Sicht
Autonome Waffen ächten - ohne Wenn und Aber!
Konsens über Verbot von Killerrobotern nicht in Sicht.
Verbotsforderung: Autonome Waffen verstoßen gegen Menschenrechte
Killerroboter bleiben umstritten
Killer-Roboter: Fakten über tödliche Systeme
Diplomaten kämpfen um Kontrolle von Killerrobotern
Autonome Kriegsmaschinen
Pressestimme: ‘Rheinpfalz’ zu autonomen Waffen
In Genf wird gerade die Zukunft von Killerrobotern diskutiert.
Im Kampf gegen den Killer-Roboter

Stoppt Killerroboter.
Tödliche Roboter-Waffen weltweit ächten.
Militärämter gegen Verbannung von Killerrobotern.
Warum autonome Waffen wohl nicht verboten werden.
Wenn Maschinen über Leben und Tod entscheiden

Pressemeldung: Autonome Waffensysteme international ächten
Keine Einigung über Umgang mit autonomen Waffen

Killerroboter: Verhandlungen ohne Einigung beendet.
„Keine Einigung zum Umgang mit Killerrobotern“
„Keine Einigung über Umgang mit Killerrobotern“
Killerroboter auf Vormarsch – Diplomaten ringen um Kontrolle
Killerroboter am Vormarsch: Diplomaten ringen um Kontrolle
Abrüstungsexperten verhandeln über Schranken für Killer-Roboter.
Was sollen Killer-Roboter dürfen?

Killerroboter: Diplomaten ringen um Kontrolle
Konsens über Verbot von Killerrobotern noch nicht in Sicht
Ringen um die Zukunft intelligenter Kampfroboter.
Konsens über Umgang mit Killerrobotern nicht in Sicht
Zähes Ringen um Umgang mit Killerrobotern in Genf
Wie gefährlich sind die Killer-Roboter?

Kein Konsens über Umgang mit Killerrobotern“
Keine Einigung zum Umgang mit Killerrobotern
Der Siegeszug der Killerroboter
Die Lage stimmt nicht optimistisch
Keine Einigung im Ringen um Umgang mit Killerrobotern in Genf

Belgian:

French:
https://www.explicite.info/articles/1669-en-guerre-contre-les-robots-tueurs
https://www.20minutes.fr/monde/2326639-20180828-robots-tueurs-ong-appellent-etats-interdire-utilisation
https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/geopolitique/geopolitique-30-aout-2018

Italian:

South Africa:

Switzerland
Killerroboter auf dem Vormarsch – Diplomaten ringen um Kontrolle
Uno verhandelt über Schranken für Killerroboter
Amnesty fordert Verbot von Kampf-Robotern
Amnesty International will Killerroboter gänzlich verbieten
Amnesty International fordert Totalverbot von Kampf-Robotern
Weshalb Killerroboter kaum verboten werden
Militärische Roboter werden die Kriegsführung revolutionieren
Killer-Roboter sind bald Realität
Amnesty International fordert Totalverbot von Kampf-Robotern
Amnesty fordert Verbot von Kampfrobotern
Sollen Maschinen Menschen töten? Sechs Fragen zur Killer-Roboter-Debatte der UNO in Genf
Kampf um die Killerroboter
Erster Erfolg für autonome Waffensysteme
Weltgemeinschaft uneins über Umgang mit Kampfrobotern
Keine Einigung im Ringen um Umgang mit Killerrobotern in Genf
Keine Einigung im Ringen um Umgang mit Killerrobotern in Genf
Keine Einigung im Ringen um Umgang mit Killerrobotern in Genf
Keine Einigung im Ringen um Umgang mit Killerrobotern in Genf
Keine Einigung im Ringen um Umgang mit Killerrobotern in Genf
Keine Einigung im Umgang mit Killerrobotern in Genf
Einsatz von Killerroboter bleiben unregelt