



CAMPAIGN TO **STOP** KILLER ROBOTS

22 April 2020

Mr. Heiko Maas
Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs
Auswärtiges Amt
Berlin 11013
GERMANY

Sent via email: l-cd@genf.auswaertiges-amt.de

RE: Lethal autonomous weapons systems

Dear Minister,

I am writing on behalf of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots to thank you for convening the Berlin Forum on lethal autonomous weapons systems webcast by the German foreign ministry on 1-2 April 2020. It was a pleasure to participate along with more than a dozen representatives from our global coalition of 155 non-governmental organizations in 64 countries.

We welcome Germany's initiative to adapt multilateral disarmament diplomacy in response to the uncertain circumstances created by rapid spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). This pandemic shows the urgent need to pay attention to warnings from scientists and heed calls to collectively handle major threats to humanity, from climate change to fully autonomous weapons.

We share Germany's desire to maintain meaningful human control over the decision to kill and agree on the need for a new international treaty to prohibit fully autonomous weapons. Permitting machines, rather than humans, to select and engage targets raises a host of fundamental ethical, moral, legal, accountability, operational, technical, and security concerns that can only be resolved through the development of a legally-binding instrument. Retaining meaningful human control over the use of force is a humanitarian priority, legal necessity, and moral imperative.

We appreciate Germany's high-level commitment to addressing concerns raised by lethal autonomous weapons systems as demonstrated by the September 2019 Alliance for Multilateralism declaration signed by more than two dozen high-level officials at the UN General Assembly.

At the Berlin Forum, the issue of human-machine interaction attracted the greatest interest by far. To build a shared conceptual framework, we recommend focusing on this issue. Identify factors to help determine the necessary quality and extent of human control over weapons systems and the use of force. Consider constraints on targets and tasks, spatial and temporal limits, and the ability to supervise and intervene. Bringing together various positions under the principle of human control would be a timely contribution to the multilateral debate.

More than 100 states support the creation of a new international treaty to prohibit or regulate lethal autonomous weapons systems. The goal of an international ban is now sought by 30 states, UN Secretary-General António Guterres, thousands of artificial intelligence and technology experts, business leaders, dozens of Nobel Peace laureates, financial institutions, and the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots.

The International Committee of the Red Cross finds there is a need for internationally agreed limits on autonomy in weapon systems to satisfy ethical concerns and ensure compliance with international humanitarian law.

While you have called for an international ban on fully autonomous weapons, German officials continue to state that it is “premature” to open negotiations on a new treaty and regard such an outcome as a long-term goal.

Much greater ambition is required to satisfy rising public concerns. We encourage Germany to bring the killer robots challenge to the attention of the UN Security Council. All Council members should comment on their desired multilateral response to this common threat to humanity.

We urge Germany to cooperate with like-minded states to negotiate a new international treaty to retain meaningful human control from the use of force. Launch negotiations no later than CCW’s December 2021 Review Conference. Only a legally-binding instrument can protect humanity from the dangerous development of fully autonomous weapons.

Sincerely,



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* The [Campaign to Stop Killer Robots](#) is coordinated by Human Rights Watch and led by a Steering Committee of 11 non-governmental organizations: Article 36, Amnesty International, Association for Aid and Relief–Japan, HRW, International Committee for Robot Arms Control, Mines Action Canada, Nobel Women’s Initiative, PAX, Pugwash, SEHLAC, and WILPF.