



# CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS

## **Intervention by the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots**

Delivered by Mary Wareham

Informal consultation of the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) Group of  
Governmental Experts (GGE) on lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS)

Geneva

28 June 2019

Mr. Chair, the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots greatly appreciates your efforts to reach convergence and foster common understandings through these draft “conclusions and recommendations.”

We see the priority that states are according to the many serious concern raised by fully autonomous weapons, as demonstrated by the high turnout at these informal consultations. We count more than 50 states here today. This shows there is strong interest in reaching an outcome to the past six years of talks on concerns raised by killer robots.

However, as you know, our coalition of 112 non-governmental organizations in 55 countries regards more guiding principles and other measures that fall short of new international law as completely insufficient to prevent the development, production and use of killer robots. We are certain that such unambitious measures will not satisfy the rising public concerns either.

Therefore we do not intend to comment on specific sections of this document with the exception of the draft recommendations.

I feel compelled to explain why: We fear such weak measures could be used to justify continued investments in autonomous weapons, paving the way for widespread production, proliferation and use of fully autonomous weapons with devastating consequences for humanity. Is that the purpose of these diplomatic talks?

Indeed, over the time of these talks we have seen military powers becoming increasingly bold in their desire to consider perceived advantages and benefits that “LAWS” could bring. A look at some of the working papers submitted in these talks helps demonstrate this trend. In March, Russia provided [a paper](#) on the “potential opportunities and limitations of military uses” of killer robots, while Australia [pitched](#) its “system of control and applications for autonomous weapon systems.” Last year, the US [provided a paper](#) elaborating on the “humanitarian benefits” of emerging technologies in the area of LAWS.

We don’t want to live in a world where machines choose targets and use violent force based only on sensor data and algorithms, without meaningful human control. Do you?

If the CCW is deemed the appropriate framework for dealing with LAWS, then the *only* path forward is for states to negotiate a new CCW protocol. If the CCW wants to be seen as responsive, relevant, and the standard-bearer for traditional disarmament diplomacy then you must move to negotiate a new CCW protocol.

Mr Chair, of this six-page document and its four paragraphs of recommendations only one line matters, and that's Paragraph 14. We don't understand the rationale for the other recommendations. What does it mean to "operationalize" guiding principles? Why discuss "best practices" if the CCW says lethal autonomous weapons systems don't yet exist? The proposed working groups reflect how the CCW used to function a long time ago and that was helpful when negotiating text of a legally-binding instrument. But what would working groups do if the goal is unclear?

Concerning Paragraph 14 we have some comments and questions on that draft recommendation:

1. When we read this document, we looked for the word "legally-binding instrument" and it is incomprehensible to us that it is not included when so many states have expressed their desire to launch negotiations on a new protocol or treaty stipulating prohibitions and restrictions on LAWS. It's unclear to us what a "normative instrument" is supposed to mean in practice. It would appear that such an "instrument" would not be legally-binding.
2. Paragraph 14 proposes continuing these talks for another two years to "work towards developing a framework." This sounds weak and unambitious. What does this even mean? It would be much clearer to "launch negotiations" on a legally binding instrument to require meaningful human control over the use of force and thereby prohibit fully autonomous weapons.
3. The proposal of a timeframe for achieving an outcome is admirable, but it will be impossible to contain this issue to the CCW for another two years if this forum remains all talk and no action. We've been here before. If you decide not to negotiate a new treaty here, then those states keen to adopt one will move down another path to achieve this goal together with our Campaign.

To close, you often hear our Campaign to Stop Killer Robots claim that "momentum is building" towards the goal of prohibiting killer robots. That's clearly not the case in this room, which is moving backwards. But outside of it we see many expressions of support for launching negotiations. Here's a few examples since the last informal consultation in May:

- UN Secretary-General António Guterres repeated his concerns with killer robots in his address to the third Artificial Intelligence for Good Global Summit in Geneva on 28 May, providing LAWS as a key example of where a legally-binding instrument is needed;
- Finland's new government published its [coalition programme](#) on 3 June, committing to pursue international negotiations "to ban the development and production of weapons systems based on artificial intelligence;"

- Nobel Peace laureates and others launched a “[Normandy Peace Manifesto](#)” at a 6 June forum, highlighting the urgent need to prohibit killer robots and admonishes major powers who “oppose the new arms control initiatives” and “abandon existing treaties;”
- The UN High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation issued [its report](#) on 10 June, which explicitly supports the call to prohibit lethal autonomous weapons systems;
- Over 680 Norwegian artificial intelligence experts, technologists, scientists, and academics issued an [open letter](#) on 19 June urging Norway to lead an international effort to prohibit fully autonomous weapons;
- Campaigners in countries such as Argentina, Australia, Canada, Colombia, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Philippines, Russia, Spain, Tunisia, UK and the US have held events and gave presentations exploring the serious threats posed by fully autonomous weapons and the urgent need for political leadership to held adopt a new treaty to prohibit killer robots.

All this in just the past month. You can expect this outreach to intensify and multiply over the coming weeks and months. We urge you to consider: How will the CCW’s lackluster effort meet the rising expectations that killer robots will be prohibited through a new treaty?