



CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS

Statement to the Convention on Conventional Weapons Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems

Geneva
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As delivered by Mary Wareham, Human Rights Watch for the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots

Mr. Chair, we appreciate the way in which you have chaired this meeting and acknowledge the way in which delegates have deepened their understandings of the concerns raised by lethal autonomous weapons systems. It shows how having draft text can focus deliberations, but it's a shame the documents are merely summaries of the various sessions of the meeting.

However, yet again, we are dismayed that a small group of states have limited the ambition of the majority and concerned by the lack of urgency for achieving a meaningful result from these diplomatic talks on lethal autonomous weapons systems.

Many of the 90 states participating in this week's United Nations meeting on these weapons expressed their firm desire to move to negotiate a new treaty to prohibit or restrict these weapons systems. Such a treaty is widely seen as necessary to enshrine the principle that states should maintain meaningful human control over the use of force.

As you know, calls to ban killer robots are multiplying rapidly and more than 4,500 artificial intelligence experts have called for a new treaty to prohibit lethal autonomous weapons systems in various open letters since 2015. That includes Yoshua Bengio, Yann le Cun, and Geoffrey Hinton, who were this week awarded the Turing Award, the most prestigious prize in the field of computer science. We welcome the fittingly recognition of their important contributions to this field and their active support for our common goal of a new treaty to ban killer robots.

It's clear that a majority of states want to do the right thing, but the calls from some states for guiding principles, declarations, guidelines, codes of conduct, compendiums of military "best practices," questionnaires, and more committees are not the answer. Such measures will not satisfy public concerns.

I will be frank. There is rising concern that these Convention on Conventional Weapons talks on lethal autonomous weapons systems are a way for militarily powers to try to placate civil society, distract public attention, and manage media expectations rather than seriously address the challenges such weapons pose for humanity.

We say this because it is the states opposing any move to create a new treaty who are investing significant funds and effort into developing weapons systems with decreasing human control over the critical functions of selecting and engaging targets.

I want to remind everyone how this meeting opened at the beginning of this week with an [appeal](#) from the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to prohibit lethal autonomous weapons systems, which he called “morally repugnant and politically unacceptable.” As he stated: “the world is watching, the clock is ticking.”

So the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots will be back in August for the next CCW meeting, but our faith in this forum is rapidly dissipating. Therefore, we will be deepening and expanding our engagement in capitals around the world and also present at the United Nations General Assembly later this year.