



CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS

Statement to the UN General Assembly First Committee on Disarmament and International Security

New York
13 October 2020

Delivered by Ousman Noor on behalf of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots

Thank you Mr. Chair.

I speak on behalf of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, a growing coalition of 165 non-governmental organizations in 65 countries working to preemptively ban fully autonomous weapons, and retain meaningful control over the use of force.

The rapid evolution of autonomous technology threatens to strip humans of their role in the use of force, and raises fundamental security, accountability, ethical and moral concerns. Weapons systems that select and engage targets without meaningful human control would undermine basic principles of international humanitarian law and human rights law including the rights to life, remedy, and dignity.

Such weapons systems must be prohibited. The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots calls on states to launch negotiations on a new treaty to preserve meaningful human control over the use of force.

Such a treaty should apply to the range of weapons systems that automatically select and engage targets on the basis of sensor inputs, that is, systems where the object or person to be attacked is determined by a sensor, rather than by a human being. An international treaty is urgently required to prohibit weapons over which humans do not have meaningful control, and to impose positive obligations to ensure that weapons are used only with meaningful human control.

The call for such a legally binding instrument has been endorsed by dozens of states, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, thousands of artificial intelligence and technology experts, more than 20 Nobel Peace laureates, faith and business leaders, and our Campaign. The International Committee of the Red Cross also finds there is an urgent need for internationally agreed limits on autonomy in weapon systems to satisfy ethical concerns and ensure compliance with international humanitarian law.

Diplomatic talks concerning lethal autonomous weapons systems are entering a critical stage. After holding nine meetings on the topic since 2014, the Convention on Conventional Weapons has made far too little progress. A handful of military powers are stubbornly resisting proposals to launch negotiations on a legally binding instrument. Meanwhile, their military investment in

artificial intelligence and emerging technologies continue unabated. If left unchecked, this could result in the further dehumanisation of warfare, and trust would be diminished in the many promising beneficial civilian applications of emerging technologies.

We remind you of the address to this 75th session of the UN General Assembly by Pope Francis, who [warned](#) that lethal autonomous weapons systems would “irreversibly alter the nature of warfare, detaching it further from human agency.” His Holiness called on states to “break with the present climate of distrust” that is leading to “an erosion of multilateralism, which is all the more serious in light of the development of new forms of military technology.”

We are all individually and collectively responsible for developing and shaping the technologies that frame the interactions between us. We must work to ensure that future technologies are developed and used to promote peace and respect for each other’s inherent dignity. The United Nations was founded for humanity to pursue non-violent solutions to problems, in the spirit of solidarity and cooperation. We must now forge a path forward together to safeguard the values which we stand for, and ensure that the technologies that we create are kept within our own control and used for the benefit of humanity.

States that want to ensure meaningful human control over the use of force must work to launch negotiations on a new international treaty and we stand ready to work with all states that are committed to achieve this goal. A new international treaty on killer robots is an ethical imperative and a legal necessity, and it is achievable due to our shared desire for a more peaceful world and more secure future for the generations to come.

Thank you

#