



Submission to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) for the Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace

Stop Killer Robots is a coalition of civil society organisations around the world working to establish new international law on autonomous weapons systems. Established in 2013, Stop Killer Robots has engaged with all multilateral forums on the issue, including at the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) and the Group of Governmental Experts related to emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS), Human Rights Council (HRC), United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), and other international conferences.

We are writing to submit our recommendations in relation to the forthcoming New Agenda for Peace, in particular relating to the priority to “reduce strategic risks [of] autonomous weapons” identified under commitment area 3 of Our Common Agenda.

We welcome this multi-stakeholder initiative to help address challenges to international peace, and thank you for your consideration of this submission.

Serious Risks of Autonomous Weapons Systems

The risks posed by autonomous weapons systems (AWS) are well documented, and include legal, ethical, humanitarian, environmental and social risks. They raise issues of compliance with international human rights law (IHRL) and the international humanitarian law principles (IHL) of distinction, proportionality, precaution and the prohibition of indiscriminate attacks. The risks are serious and have the potential to threaten international peace now and for future generations.

With ongoing instabilities in international security and mounting evidence of weapon systems with autonomous capabilities being used in contemporary conflicts, political leadership is urgently required to avoid the devastating humanitarian consequences of allowing the development, use, and proliferation of autonomous weapons systems. We do not have time for further delays; negotiations for a legally binding instrument are needed now.

International Support for a Legally Binding Instrument

A total of 90 States have now declared support for an international legally binding instrument on autonomous weapons systems, to safeguard against these risks.¹ The number of States confirming support has continued to increase each year, demonstrating clear political momentum recognising the

¹ Details of States positions can be found on Automated Decision Research, available at: <https://automatedresearch.org/state-positions/>.



urgent need to launch negotiations. The call is also supported by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC),² experts in technology and artificial intelligence,³ faith leaders,⁴ military veterans,⁵ and civil society organisations around the world.⁶

There is also widespread recognition of the need for a combination of both prohibitions and regulations to ensure meaningful human control over the use of force. This policy coherence is evident in multiple written contributions and proposals for a new normative and operational framework made by States from around the world.⁷ The significant progress made on developing a shared understanding and appropriate responses provides a solid foundation for negotiations to commence for a legally binding instrument on autonomous weapons systems.

Apart from discussions within the United Nations, States are taking initiative to agree upon the urgent need to launch negotiations for a legally binding instrument within international conferences, as recognised in the Communiqué off the Latin American and the Caribbean Conference of Social and Humanitarian Impact of Autonomous Weapons⁸ agreed by 33 Latin American and Caribbean States at Belén, Costa Rica in February 2023; a Special Statement on the social and humanitarian impact of autonomous weapons⁹ made by 22 Heads of State at the 28th Ibero-American Summit adopted at Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic in March 2023; and a Joint Communiqué of the LXXXIX Meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Central American Integration System (SICA)¹⁰ in March 2023. With additional international conferences planned throughout the year in other regions, political momentum is gathering pace in demand of negotiations being launched.

² The [ICRC Position on Autonomous Weapons](#), May 2021, recommends that States adopt new legally binding rules to establish international limits on autonomous weapon systems and address the risks they raise.

³ A [pledge](#) signed by thousands of organisations and individuals with expertise in artificial intelligence and technology calls for governments to establish new international law on AWS.

⁴ An [interfaith statement](#) signed by faith organisations and leaders from around the world calls for new international law on the development, production and use of AWS.

⁵ An [open letter](#) signed by military veterans around the world calls for new international law on AWS.

⁶ [Stop Killer Robots](#) is a coalition of 200+ NGOs in 67+ countries calling for new international law on AWS.

⁷ A compilation of all written proposals for the normative and operational framework made at the 2022 CCW GGE on LAWS can be found on UNODA, available at: https://meetings.unoda.org/meeting/57989/documents?f%5B0%5D=document_type_meeting%3ANon-papers&f%5B1%5D=document_type_meeting%3AWorking%20papers

⁸ Communiqué of the Latin American and Caribbean Conference on the social and humanitarian impact of autonomous weapons, 24 February 2023, available at: https://conferenciaawscostarica2023.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/EN-Communique-of-La-Ribera-de-Belen-Costa-Rica-February-23-24-2023_.pdf

⁹ Comunicado especial sobre el impacto social y humanitario de las armas autónomas, 25 March 2023, available at: <https://www.segib.org/?document=comunicado-especial-sobre-el-impacto-social-y-humanitario-de-las-armas-autonomas>

¹⁰ Comunicado Conjunto el SICA llama a la urgente necesidad de negociar un instrumento internacional con prohibiciones y regulaciones respecto a la autonomía en los sistemas de armas, 27 March 2023, available at: https://www.sica.int/documentos/comunicado-conjunto-el-sica-llama-a-la-urgente-necesidad-de-negociar-un-instrumento-internacional-con-prohibiciones-y-regulaciones-respecto-a-la-autonomia-en-los-sistemas-de-armas_1_131816.html



Our Recommendations

The New Agenda for Peace is a crucial opportunity for UN leadership to **call for the urgent launch of negotiations for a legally binding instrument, to include both prohibitions and regulations on the development and use of autonomous weapons systems.**

We consider that legally binding rules are fundamental to dealing with the risks associated with autonomous weapon systems. Non-binding measures would create an ecosystem that permits the development and use of autonomous weapon systems absent clear boundaries of acceptability. A legal instrument is required to provide the necessary certainty on the rules for the development and use of autonomous weapons systems now and in the future.

At the 77th UN General Assembly First Committee, 70 States united in delivering a joint statement¹¹ calling for an urgent international response to the serious humanitarian, legal, security, technological and ethical concerns raised by autonomous weapons systems. The statement recognised “the human element is and must remain central in the use of force” and emphasised “the necessity for human beings to exert appropriate control, judgement and involvement in relation to the use of weapons systems”, and also called for further proactive engagement from the UN Secretary General in the forthcoming Agenda for Peace. We see this as an important opportunity for UN leadership to provide concrete vision on the need to establish a legally binding instrument on autonomous weapons systems.

At this critical junction, a New Agenda for Peace is required that is forward looking, providing vision and clarity for world leaders in promoting a more peaceful world. We therefore urge you to make clear the urgent need for a legally binding instrument on the development and use of autonomous weapons systems to ensure meaningful human control over the use of force and safeguard against the serious risks these weapons pose to all of humanity.

We thank you for your consideration.

¹¹ Stop Killer Robots, “70 states deliver joint statement on autonomous weapons systems at UN General Assembly”, available at <https://www.stopkillerrobots.org/news/70-states-deliver-joint-statement-on-autonomous-weapons-systems-at-un-general-assembly/>.