

CCW GGE on LAWS

Campaign to Stop Killer Robots statement 21 September 2020

2020 is a year of many first and the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots is pleased to participate in this first virtual and physically-distanced diplomatic meeting on lethal autonomous weapons systems.

For me personally, this is my first participation in a meeting of this Group of Governmental Experts.

The Campaign is glad to see diplomacy adapting to the uncertain new circumstances brought about by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and transitioning into the digital world.

The pandemic has provided time for us to reflect on the importance of being prepared and able to respond with urgency to existential threats to humanity, from climate change to fully autonomous weapons.

A new international treaty is now widely regarded the only effective way to deal with fully autonomous weapons. We see support continues to build for this goal.

For example, since the last Group of Governmental Experts meeting on killer robots in August 2019, the Campaign has grown from 113 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in 57 countries to now encompass 165 NGOs in 65 countries, which is a significant increase.

CCW High Contracting Parties should bear in mind the growing public awareness of the dangers raised by removing human control from the use of force. Many CCW states are investing heavily in civilian robotics and emerging technologies. You must provide the necessary regulatory response to killer robots to avoid a technology backlash and retain your competitive edge.

We urge states to make up for lost time and achieve measurable progress by the CCW's Sixth Review Conference in December 2021. Failure to produce an appropriate regulatory response by this milestone meeting would not bode well for the CCW's future.

Focused deliberations will help lay the groundwork for negotiating the international treaty that is urgently required to ban fully autonomous weapons and retain meaningful human control over the use of force.

We have read and reviewed every commentary and working paper submitted by states to the CCW this year, including those that are not available on the UN website. We shared our own [CCW commentary](#) in June and encourage all states that have not yet done so to provide submissions and make them publicly available.

The Campaign appreciates the commonalities paper prepared by the previous GGE chair. Several submissions highlight the need to determine if international humanitarian law is sufficient and many find a need for a legally binding instrument.

Most submissions draw attention to the guiding principle on human-machine interaction. That desire to retain human control over the use of force provides a sound basis for collective action. We look forward to urgent progress being made on this frontier.

Thank you.