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Statement by Stop Killer Robots

13 October 2022

Mr. Chair,

Stop Killer Robots is a global coalition of 190 civil society organizations across 67 countries with shared vision, values and ambition to achieve a new international legal framework on autonomous weapons systems.

We are working for a world in which we respect each other's inherent dignity, in which technology is developed and used to promote peace, justice, human rights, and equality. We recognize how our choices regarding technology change the relationships between us and believe that developments in artificial intelligence should be used to build better societies and overcome inequalities and systems of oppression.

We seek to build and strengthen social norms that reject autonomous killing by machines and demand meaningful human control to ensure responsibility and accountability in the use of force. We aim to counter digital dehumanization, to protect our rights and identities free from structures of discrimination on the basis of race, gender, ability, sexuality, nationality or socio-economic status, and to pursue non-violent solutions to problems, through cooperation, negotiation, and collective activism.

An agreed international legal framework is urgently needed to safeguard against the serious challenges to ethics, law, security and the protection of civilians posed by autonomous weapons systems. With ongoing instabilities in international security and mounting evidence of autonomous weapons systems being used in contemporary conflicts, political leadership is required to avoid the devastating consequences of allowing the development, use, and proliferation of autonomous weapons systems.

The call for a legally binding instrument on autonomous weapons is supported by over 70 states, the International Committee of the Red Cross, groups of scientists, faith leaders, military veterans, civil society organizations and public opinion. Set out in his 'Our Common Agenda' report, the United Nations Secretary General calls for states to "establish internationally agreed limits" on autonomous weapons systems.

The call for a new international framework is also made by leaders in robotics technology and artificial intelligence. Last week, six of the world's largest companies in this field, including



Boston Dynamics, Agility Robotics, ANYbotics, Clearpath Robotics, Open Robotics and Unitree Robotics pledged to prevent the weaponization of their advanced-mobility general purpose robots and issued a joint statement that autonomous weapons raise serious ethical issues and would harm public trust in technology in ways that would damage the tremendous benefits robotics could bring to society.

This month, during the 51st UN Human Rights Council session, a resolution was adopted by consensus on the 'human rights implications of new and emerging technologies in the military domain'. The resolution is a positive step forward in promoting safeguards against the legal, ethical and security risks posed by autonomous weapons systems, and recognises the challenges to human accountability and responsibility, the imperative for humans to remain central in the use of force and highlights concerns around discrimination, marginalization, inequality and unpredictability of outcomes.

Over 9 years of UN discussions policy coherence has developed towards a shared understanding of the framework that is needed to address the risks posed by autonomy in weapons. States have converged on proposals that include both prohibitions on certain types of autonomous weapon systems and regulations to ensure meaningful human control over all weapon systems incorporating autonomy. This was reflected in a wide range of written proposals for a normative and operational framework made this year by states within the CCW GGE on LAWS. Yet, despite this shared vision, the report of the GGE this year was stripped of its substantive content, leaving the group with nothing of significance to show for the hard work undertaken this year. We call upon states to demonstrate leadership and avoid becoming complicit in the deadlock that has prevented substantive outcomes from being made.

A legally binding framework is an ethical imperative and a legal necessity, and is achievable if states are willing to commit to working together in the spirit of cooperation and solidarity to launch negotiations. We urge states to unite, and achieve a more peaceful world now and for generations to come.

Thank you.