



(For delivery on 6/8/2021 at the GGE on lethal autonomous weapons systems)

Thank you, Mr. President

Today I would like to share some ideas that we believe are important, based on the participations that we have heard this week. In this way, we aim to contribute with some thoughts for the report.

These comments reflect the considerations that we in SEHLAC and the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots have discussed. These are based on consultations with experts in the fields of defence, emerging technologies, artificial intelligence, ethics, international law, human rights, sociology, and Humanitarian affairs because autonomous weapons are not exclusively a technical or military matter.

Firstly, we would like to insist on the notion that autonomous weapons systems that are the main concern for us are those that would select and engage targets without meaningful human control, including those that would target human beings.

Because of their intrinsic characteristics, it would be impossible to guarantee full compliance with the principles and rules of IHL, including the protection of civilians, the attribution of responsibilities and accountability. These concerns were also shared by various delegations, including México, Chile, and Brazil whose statements were very clear, concrete, and justified in IHL.

Secondly, and considering the advances and convergence achieved by this forum (for example, on the structure of a future instrument) we would like to recall our kind invitation for delegations to learn about different initiatives to address the challenges of autonomy in other sectors. Without a doubt, these can inform and contextualize the work of this GGE. We are convinced that at this stage, there is no need to create new committees; but rather, to consolidate the work that has been done in this and other forums.

In previous opportunities we have analysed the relevance of existing frameworks for this forum, such as the European Commission proposal for rules and actions for trustworthy artificial intelligence and the resolution of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, which mentions specifically the relevance of a meaningful human control.

Today, I would like to refer **specifically** to the UNESCO Recommendations on Artificial Intelligence, which were negotiated by consensus by its 193 country members. Although these recommendations are focused on AI, and autonomous weapons could use a wider scope of technologies, the recommendation seems to be relevant because of it approaches the issue of autonomy.

In particular, I would like to highlight the next elements, which I will read in English because there is no official translation:

“Addressing risks and ethical concerns of AI should not hamper innovation and development but rather provide new opportunities and stimulate ethically-conducted research and innovation that anchor AI technologies in human rights and fundamental freedoms, values and principles, and moral and ethical reflection.

Member States should ensure that it is always possible to attribute ethical and legal responsibility for any stage of the life cycle of AI systems, as well as in cases of remedy related to AI systems, to physical persons or to existing legal entities.



An AI system can never replace ultimate human responsibility and accountability. As a rule, life and death decisions should not be ceded to AI systems.

We must be consistent with **that** and other adopted frameworks, and from SEHLAC we think that this consistency cannot be guaranteed in any other way rather through a legally binding instrument, which we urge the States to adopt.

I will reiterate: The topic we are discussing here is also a social and humanitarian matter that **requires** to have an intersectional perspective, including gender and multidisciplinary approaches. And this is not only SEHLAC and our Campaign's approach. This perspective has also been adopted by international organizations (like UNESCO) which base the legitimacy and strengthen of their arguments on the protection of fundamental rights, using an approach that understands perfectly that technology is not neutral, and that this is not only an engineering matter.

In this sense, I would like to recognize the efforts made by Panama, Costa Rica, Peru, Uruguay, Sierra Leone, Philippines, El Salvador, The State of Palestine, and Argentina. Their contributions are important and demonstrate that a commitment have been reached between different regions to move forward concrete proposals to answer these challenges.

We must not lose sight **that** autonomous weapons would affect primarily the countries of the Global South, those with humanitarian crisis, and populations that have been historically marginalized. This fact is demonstrated by both history and by every day news.

I would like to finish with the next idea: A legally binding instrument about autonomous weapons would not stigmatize the technology development in defence; much less, technological advances in general. It **would only** respond to the challenges of delegating critical functions of weapons to sensors and algorithms.

In fact, and international framework would create legal certainty for developers and users, and would avoid the multiplication of national laws that would be inconsistent and irrelevant for others.

This framework is both urgent and essential.

Mister president, delegates, the discussions about autonomous weapons have taken far too many years. Certainly, there have been some advances; and convergences have been established.

However, we think that continuing a dialogue without a mandate of negotiation is irrelevant -and also a decision that is not neutral, because it would only benefit those who want to develop these autonomous weapons systems without any regulation, and this is unacceptable.

For this forum to be relevant, we need to see concrete results and we trust in your commitment. Under your wise guide Mr. President, I am sure we will accomplish this common goal very soon.

Thank you.

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