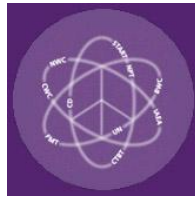




ICRAC



Article 36



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Rt Hon Philip Hammond  
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs  
King Charles Street  
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8 April 2015

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing to you on the issue of lethal autonomous weapons systems ahead of the UN Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) expert meeting which will take place in Geneva from 13-17 April 2015. The purpose of the Convention is to ban or restrict the use of weapons that are considered to cause unnecessary or unjustifiable suffering to combatants or to affect civilians indiscriminately.

Over the past decade, the expanded use of unmanned armed vehicles has dramatically changed warfare. Rapid advances in technology are now resulting in the development of increasingly autonomous weapons systems, presenting new humanitarian and legal challenges. International efforts to build consensus and tackle these challenges would benefit from more discussions over states' policies and existing practices on autonomous weapons systems. We believe the UK could play an important role here. The UK would make a positive contribution at the upcoming CCW expert meeting by presenting its policy and practice on weapons systems with autonomous and automatic functions.

One element of UK policy relates to ensuring acceptable levels of human control in the operation of weapons systems. On this, we hope the UK will consider publicly supporting the principle of 'meaningful human control over individual attacks'. This is in line with the UK's assertion that "weapons systems will always remain under human control" (March 2013) and could help establish a useful principle at the forthcoming CCW meeting in Geneva, which in turn could have a positive consensus-building effect internationally.

At present, policy information on the UK's approach to autonomous weapons systems is spread across many sources, including Hansard parliamentary records, statements to international forums and publications by the MOD's Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre. By drawing these strands together into a comprehensive national policy, the UK would make its position clearer and more accessible as well as set a positive example internationally.

The UK has been a major developer of advanced military equipment. It is clearly in our interest to ensure that all weapons systems remain under strict human control, and, as such, for the UK to be at the forefront of international discussions to prevent anyone developing autonomous weapons systems.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts on these points and to continuing to work constructively with the UK government on this issue in Geneva later this month and beyond.

Yours sincerely,

**Dr Rebecca Johnson**  
Executive Director, Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy

**Professor Noel Sharkey**  
Chairman, International Committee for Robot Arms Control

**Thomas Nash**  
Director, Article 36

**Steven Smith MBE**  
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Executive Director, United Nations Association – UK