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United Nations Simulation Conference 2021

United Nations General Assembly

Background Guide

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Letter from the Chairs

Greetings Delegates!

It gives us great pleasure to welcome you to the General Assembly and sincerely hope that this background guide assists you with your impending mountain of research. We are truly honoured that you all have decided to spend your time, during a crucial period, where you will be faced with the pressures of academics and simultaneously strive to work harder as you all compete to promote the agendas of your allocated nations. Along with working hand in hand with your peersto provide a longstanding, majority consensual solution

MUN's provide that complacent balance between the finer points of a conference, including thedevelopment of soft skills together with those of critical analysis, evaluation as well as networking.
For any information or questions, feel free to contact us. We wish you the best of luck for theconference and look forward to seeing you!

Sincerely,

Chairs of the United Nations General Assembly

Haadi Shahani & Sreya Bino

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly of the United Nations (GA) was established in 1945 under the Charter of the United Nations and it occupies a central position as the chief deliberative, policymaking, and representative organ of the United Nations. The Assembly is empowered to make recommendations to States on international issues within its competence. It has also initiated actions – political, economic, humanitarian, social, and legal – which have benefited the lives of millions of people throughout the world. It comprises of 193 Members of the United Nations and provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues covered by the Charter. The General Assembly plays a key role in peace operation financing. Under the UN Charter, the General Assembly cannot discuss and make recommendations on peace and security matters which are at that time being addressed by the Security Council.

The six Main Committees are the Disarmament and International Security Committee (First Committee); the Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee); the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (Third Committee); the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee); the Administrative and Budgetary Committee (Fifth Committee); and the Legal Committee (Sixth Committee). This year, the General Assembly is not constricted to one sub-committee but acts as a whole body.

FUNCTIONS AND POWERS

According to the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly may:

- Discuss any question relating to international peace and security and, except where a dispute or situation is currently being discussed by the Security Council, make recommendations on it.
- Discuss, with the same exception, and make recommendations on any questions within the scope of the Charter or affecting the powers and functions of any organ of the United Nations
- Consider and make recommendations on the general principles of cooperation for maintaining international peace and security, including disarmament
- Consider and approve the United Nations budget and establish the financial assessments of Member States
- Elect the non-permanent members of the Security Council and the members of other United Nations councils and organs and, on the recommendation of the Security Council, appoint the Secretary-General

- Initiate studies and make recommendations to promote international political cooperation, the development and codification of international law, the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and international collaboration in the economic, social, humanitarian, cultural, educational, and health fields
- Consider reports from the Security Council and other United Nations organs
- Make recommendations for the peaceful settlement of any situation that might impair friendly relations among countries

Mental Health Awareness and Improving International Responses to Mental Health Crises

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as a "state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." Because healthy living conditions and general mental and physical health are interconnected, mental health is a vital element of international safety. Behavioral and mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety disorders, and disruptive behavioral disorders, are the major causes of adjustment problems in adolescents and young people around the world. There has been an increasing acknowledgment of the important role mental health plays in achieving global developmental goals.

Individuals suffering from mental illnesses or mental disorders may face social stigma, discrimination, and limitations in exercising their civil and political rights. Due to a shortage of mental health, social, and emergency relief services, mental health patients typically have limited access to school and work prospects, resulting in poor educational outcomes and greater rates of homelessness, unemployment, and poverty. Despite the fact that many mental health illnesses can be adequately treated at a reasonable cost, the gap between those who need care and those who have access to it remains significant.

In fact, people suffering from mental disorders experience a 40-60% higher risk of premature death due to physical health problems, such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and HIV infection. Gender and age, too, are factors that can exacerbate mental health issues. Women have up to twice as many depressive episodes as males, despite the fact that men are up to five times more likely to commit suicide than women. Similarly, children and adolescents are especially vulnerable, with an estimated 20% of children and adolescents having mental health issues or disorders, and half of those disorders occurring before the age of 14. All facilities, services, and required conditions should be provided by member states. However, Member states do not need to ensure the attainment of a healthy life for their citizens because it may alter due to external factors, such as the individual's biological properties and socioeconomic conditions. Rather, Member States should guarantee a minimum level of access to essential health components, such as maternal or child health services, within available resources without delay.

Key Parties Involved

1. UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The state of mental health in America is one that requires the attention of all those around the world. In the year leading up to the COVID-19 epidemic, 19.86 per cent of people, or over 50 million Americans, were diagnosed with a mental disorder. Approximately half of the individuals with mental illnesses do not receive treatment, resulting in over 27 million untreated adults in the United States. 67 per cent of individuals with mental illnesses in Hawaii, the lowest-ranking state, did not obtain treatment. Even in Vermont, the nation's top-ranking state, 43 per cent of individuals with mental illnesses were not receiving treatment. However, steps to alleviate this dire situation have been implemented. The implementation of 988 as the national three-digit suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline and increasing mental health education and supports in schools, particularly for BIPOC youth are just two of the many steps taken. These recent changes to the mental health policy priorities in America have brought about revolutionary change.

2. INDIA

In 2017, India's President, Ram Nath Kovind, declared that the country was on the verge of a mental health crisis. According to research, 14 per cent of India's population suffered from mental health issues in the same year, with 45.7 million people suffering from depressive illnesses and 49 million suffering from anxiety disorders. In India, having a mental health issue is viewed as a character flaw, and individuals who suffer from mental illnesses are stigmatized. Mental illnesses are also seen to be the result of a lack of self-control and willpower. Mental health stigma, as well as a lack of access, affordability, and knowledge, lead to large treatment disparities. To combat this, the Mental Healthcare Act of 2017 included a number of provisions aimed at improving India's mental health situation. However, as of 2021, only a few states included a separate line item in their budgets towards mental health infrastructure.

3. SAUDI ARABIA

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia adopted a national mental health policy in 2006, which included specialty programs for patients with drug and alcohol addiction, as well as children, adolescents, and the elderly. In 2014, the government established a mental health law that included several WHO recommendations from the United Nations Principles for the Protection of Persons with Mental Illness and the Improvement of Mental Health Care. By that time, Saudi mental health legislation had already achieved several key milestones, such as allocating 4% of total healthcare spending to mental disorders, compared to an international average of less than 2%, but even this lag behind other high-income countries, where mental disorders account for a median of 6% of total healthcare spending. The share of total mental health spending committed to treatment in mental institutions (78%) is more equivalent to low-income (100%) than high-income (44%) countries.

4. CHINA

Mental health in China is a growing issue. China's stringent social standards, as well as religious and cultural convictions about personal reputation and societal peace, stifle the urge to seek therapy. While the Chinese government is dedicated to developing mental health services and laws, rural areas have a shortage of mental health workers and access to experts. The two most common mental health problems in China are depression and anxiety. The enormous burden of mental illness emphasizes the urgent need for better mental health care. However, in China, as in most other nations, the treatment gap for people with mental illnesses is unacceptable, with 91.8 per cent of people with any diagnosis of mental illness never getting assistance.

5. AUSTRALIA

When it comes to good mental health care for their population, Australia is a country that has implemented highly hands-on and significant policies. Mental health services in Australia are provided through a complicated combination of public and commercial systems, with financing split among the Australian, state, and territory governments, people, and private health insurers. "The National Mental Health Strategy was supported by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments of Australia in 1992." The goals of this strategy were to "improve the lives of people with mental

illness and those who care for them," "promote the mental health of the Australian community (wherever possible), "prevent the development of mental health problems and mental disorders," "reduce the impact of mental disorders on individuals, families, and the community," and "assure the rights of people with mental disorders."

Main Issues of Concern

Stigmatization

Mental illness carries a significant, albeit hidden, weight of stigmatization and human rights violations. Mental illness is frequently viewed as incurable, and mentally ill people are stereotyped as violent and dangerous. People who are addicted to alcohol or other drugs are seen as morally and psychologically weak.

Stigmatization causes people with mental illnesses to be shunned by their friends and family, exacerbating emotions of rejection, loneliness, and demoralization. Because stigmatization leads to discrimination, it becomes socially acceptable to deny stigmatized people access to legally protected benefits.

Gender Disparities

Gender roles are critical determinants of mental health since they govern the unequal power relationship between men and women and the consequences of that inequality. They also evaluate men and women's sensitivity and exposure to certain mental health hazards. Women are more likely than men to suffer from mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, and somatic symptoms. It is one of the most common diagnoses in primary care settings, and it causes major public health issues.

Depression, which is twice as common in women as it is in men, is expected to be the second greatest cause of global disability burden by 2020. Another prevalent illness, alcoholism, has a lifetime prevalence rate that is more than twice as high in males as it is in women. Men are also more than three times as likely as women to suffer from antisocial personality disorder.

Social Media

One survey among 54 adolescents aged 11 through 18 years suggests that social media is commonly perceived as a threat to mental health in youth. A second study on the impact of social media on people's mental health suggests there are challenges and opportunities as previous studies had provided mixed findings, "with many revealing a small but significant negative effect of social media use on mental health".

Questions to consider

1. What are the key mental health concerns in countries and through which strategies and approaches are they being addressed?
2. What is the level of responsibility of the public sector in addressing mental health issues (prevention and care) and maintaining the highest possible standards of care in the face of other health priorities and limited resources?
3. What mechanisms can governments put in place to ensure an adequate supply of psychotropic drugs?

4. How can nongovernmental and other community-based organizations be engaged in a national mental health program?
5. What measures has your country put (or does it plan to put) in place to fight discrimination and stigmatization of mentally ill people and their families?
6. Do individuals and families with mental and neurological disorders get social support or benefits under poverty-alleviation schemes or social welfare measures in your country?
7. How can the health sector improve intersectoral collaboration in order to remove gender bias and discrimination and to modify social structural factors such as child care responsibilities, transport, cost, and lack of health insurance that constrain women's access to mental health care?

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The Question of Military Use of Artificial Intelligence

The militarized usage of artificial intelligence (AI) is an increasingly relevant issue, as a substantial portion of the underlying technologies needed for autonomous weaponry has been developed in recent years. Put simply, it is a computer's ability to perform tasks generally regarded to require human intelligence, such as recognition and decision-making. The issues regarding the militarization of artificial intelligence largely revolve around the removal of human judgment and the subsequent implications of the usage of such technology. "AI systems could accelerate the pace of combat to a point in which machine actions surpass the rate of human decision-making, potentially resulting in a loss of human control in warfare." The potential danger posed by such technology is of the utmost priority, and the scale of its effects is not known yet, but it is only now beginning to be understood.

The fear of such technological developments has led to a strong call for action, and some steps have been taken, such as a General Assembly meeting on October 26th, 2018, discussing the dangers posed by artificial intelligence and potential ways to solve the problem, and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) establishing a 'center on AI.' Nevertheless, some experts consider this to be an insufficient and sluggish response, especially when compared to the rapid developments made by militaries of various nations such as the United States of America, the Russian Federation, and the People's Republic of China.

Armed wars were fought solely with humans and manned weapons until the turn of the twentieth century. The argument about Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) has only acquired traction as a result of quickly evolving technology. The world community is on the verge of introducing completely autonomous weapons systems, despite the fact that countries have yet to do so. Lethal Autonomous Robotics (LARs), Fully Autonomous Weapons Systems (FAWS), remotely piloted aerial systems, or even killer robots are all terms that have been used to describe LAWS.

At the moment, there are varying levels of oversight on the autonomous spectrum that humans may exercise:

- Semi-autonomous weapon (Human-in-the loop) systems necessitate direct human input when carrying out operations.
- Supervised autonomous weapon (Human-on-the-loop) systems are supervised by humans who may override its functions at any time
- Autonomous weapon (Human-out-of-the-loop) systems, including LAWS, selectand target individuals without any form of human control.

While there is no universal definition of LAWS, the word is commonly used to describe weapons that are fully autonomous as opposed to those that need human oversight to carry out an attack. However, the US Department of Defense defines lethal autonomous weapons as "weapon system(s) that, once activated, can select and engage targets without further intervention by a human operator." This issue has given rise to a plethora of legal and ethical disagreements between countries, which was compounded by a lack of robust accountability mechanisms and regulatory frameworks needed to address the problems that LAWS will bring about.

Key Vocabulary:

Artificial Intelligence: "The ability of a digital computer or computer-controlled robot to perform tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings." Artificial intelligence can be used to perform a 4 large variety of specialized tasks, no artificial intelligence has achieved human-level intelligence, but instead designed to excel at a few certain intellectual functions

Autonomy: "The condition or quality of being self-governing in order to achieve an assigned task based on the system's own situational awareness (integrated sensing, perceiving, and analyzing), planning, and decision making." Likewise, Autonomous weaponry are weapons that can choose to fire without human command.

Pattern Recognition: To digitally "identify and categorize unstructured data into specific classifications." This is efficient but vulnerable to error. The integration of pattern recognition into military weaponry allows for the targeting, tracking, and attacking of selected individuals.

Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS): "Weapon systems that use sensor suites and computer algorithms to independently identify a target and employ an onboard weapon system to engage and destroy the target without manual human control of the system."

Algorithm: The rules and procedure regarding how artificial intelligence should approach new situations, and/or learn from old ones, and/or store collected data.

Machine Learning (ML): Using an algorithm to take collected data and autonomously learn from it, essential to AI that can learn without human interference. ML often uses algorithms to learn by repeated trial and error, trying to reach a set goal such as identifying a specific trend, beginning with simple instructions, slightly changing the instructions, and refining the instructions by using or awarding the new sets of instruction that proved more successful, while discarding or punishing the new ones that didn't, an efficient but volatile way of learning

Automated Sentry Guns: A sentry gun is a gun that is automatically aimed and fired at targets that are detected by sensors. The earliest functioning military sentry guns were the close-in weapon systems point-defense weapons for detecting and destroying short-range incoming missiles and enemy aircraft first used exclusively on naval assets, and now also as land-based defenses.

Timeline

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
1972	The US Air Force attacks the Ham Rong Bridge in North Vietnam by deploying laser guided weapons—predecessors of modern-day precision- guided munitions—during the Vietnam War.
1983 (December 2nd)	The United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) is signed into effect. The Convention's purpose is to limit or ban weapons deemed indefensibly cruel such as anti-personnel mines and blinding lasers for conflict.
1988 (July 3rd)	During the Iran-Iraq War, the US Navy's Aegis air defense system (stationed aboard the USS Vincennes in the Persian Gulf) mistakenly registers an Iranian commercial jet as an enemy plane. It proceeds to fire at the airplane in semi-automatic mode, resulting in the deaths of all 290 passengers.
2002 (February 4th)	The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) deploys its Predator drone in Afghanistan in an attempt to kill Osama Bin Laden. Instead, the targeted killing causes the death of three civilians.
2006 (September)	The Republic of Korea outlines its intention to place Samsung SGR-A1 sentry guns along the Korean Demilitarized Zone (which divides the two Koreas). While they can locate and track targets independently, manual confirmation is needed before the robots can fire.
2013 (April)	The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots was formed with the support of 87 NGOs, including Human Rights Watch, in 49 countries. The global coalition lobbies for a pre-emptive ban on LAWS.

2013 (May 30th)	Christof Heyns, the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions, presents a report to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) on the development of LAWS. In it, he emphasizes that "war without reflection is mechanical slaughter."
2016 (April 7th)	The US Navy and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) unveil the Sea Hunter: an unmanned tracking vessel able to patrol oceans for enemy submarines for months at a time.
2017 (August 21st)	The founders of 116 AI and robotics-based companies publish an open letter imploring the UN to enact a ban on LAWS. One section declares, "Once developed, [LAWS] will permit armed conflict to be fought at a scale greater than ever, and at timescales faster than humans can comprehend."
2018 (April 9th – 13th)	82 countries in the CCW convene to discuss banning LAWS. The prospect of additional international legal frameworks is backed by 26 countries and is rejected by France, Israel, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. Much of the discussion centres around compliance with international humanitarian law.

Current Situation

Currently, weapons are equipped with increasingly more autonomous functions. Although no countries have developed fully autonomous weapons for use in battle, many are in the process of testing LAWS with constantly lower levels of human oversight— a level of trust that many countries are not willing to place in robots.

Political Considerations

Several global superpowers are already on the cusp of developing technology that could place the world on the brink of war, if provoked. This has increased the need to enact formal, in depth regulatory measures on LAWS before it is too late. On a final note, it is not just states that have harnessed the immense power of LAWS; drug cartels and militant groups like Islamic State have also begun to employ the capabilities of drones, which is particularly dangerous because of their tendency to act unpredictably and dangerously especially given the international community's inability to hold them accountable for such behaviour.

Technical Considerations

Several obstacles still stand in the way of a regulated development of lethal autonomous weapons. The lack of a universal definition for the term is a major reason why no major actions have been taken by the UN yet (because member states are not entirely sure what level of human oversight qualifies a weapon as a lethal autonomous weapon). The reason for each country's varying conception of the term is due to their desire to turn a blind eye to certain discrepancies surrounding LAWS' abilities. Instead, some may desire to utilize weapons that are autonomous to a small degree during a conflict without facing the legal and ethical ramifications that surround LAWS. At the root of this issue is a lack of consensus on the term 'meaningful human control'— in other words, the degree of control a human must have over an autonomous system. This may mean writing the system's code, supervising its functions, or piloting its movement, among other things. As it stands, all member parties to the CCW have declared their commitment to maintaining a level of meaningful human control over their lethal autonomous weapons, and that a person should always be held liable when an autonomous weapon carries out a fatal shot. Given that meaningful human control serves as a critical link between LAWS and their creators, it is imperative that all members of DISEC come to agree on a singular definition of the term.

Ethical Considerations

As international debate surrounding LAWS continues to intensify, many of the previously outlined arguments opposing them remain the same. However, there have also been a growing number of reasons why countries have begun to take an interest in developing them. The efficacy of LAWS that allow them to serve as replacements for front-line soldiers implies that they will provide other benefits on the battlefield. Proponents argue that not only can autonomous systems act with more impartiality, efficiency, and precision than humans, but when LAWS operate in coordinated groups (also known as wolfpacks), conflicts are likely to become shorter and more decisive. Similarly, because LAWS only have the capacity to obey programmed instructions, impulsive and emotionally charged actions are no longer a possibility. Without feelings of anger and fear, as well as the desire to self-preserve, LAWS would be able to operate in more dangerous battlefields, such as minefields, and have the ability to refrain from firing for a longer amount of time. Ultimately, the crux of the positive arguments surrounding LAWS are rooted in the belief that autonomous weapons would act in a more logical and predictable manner than their human counterparts.

Major Issues of Concern:

1) The Potential Consequences of Using Artificial Intelligence for Military Purposes

Militaries around the world have recognized the potential influence that AI will have on armed conflict, experts argue AI weaponry "will be too fast, too numerous, and will create an environment too complex for humans to direct… the various new technologies are rapidly taking us to a place where we may not want to go, but probably are unable to avoid." Unlike other forms of weaponry, in which a way of inflicting damage is devised, AI often serves to maximize the efficiency or success rate of other weapons, by using whatever technologies deemed assistive for the weapons being used, examples of such technologies include the usage of AI driven facial recognition (and 12 other biometric artificial intelligence pattern recognition software) and AI driven navigational systems. An example of the drastic benefits accompanying militarized AI is the USA's plan to implement AI in tanks, which would make them (at least) three times more efficient at acquiring, targeting, and engaging targets than regular human-operated ones. The increase in efficiency and the consequential increase in lethality makes AI a desirable accessory, but this aspect of AI is regarded as an issue when considered alongside another, many consider AI "impossible to precisely and consistently predict what specific actions a(n)… intelligent system will take to achieve its objectives." A single error/malfunction in a militarized AI may lead to sudden mass failure and subsequently, widespread destruction, unlike a human failure which is individual and significantly smaller in potential danger. The unpredictability of AI makes it a delicate and dangerous technology and may "lead to a profound military revolution."

2) Humanitarian Perspective

AI-driven weaponry is unique, utilizing cyberspace to maximize efficiency and lethality, and mimicking human intelligence to better complete any given missions. However, a "major concern with facial recognition is its accuracy." Although AI driven weaponized vehicles are incredibly precise at aiming, the target recognition used raises a humanitarian issue, in that the device may err and target an innocent civilian, and if the device is autonomous (a LAW), human command would not be present to prevent such a situation, this would lead to unnecessary loss of life. Furthermore, AI failures with LAWs are significantly more dangerous than human ones despite the increase in accuracy (AI was shown to have only a 2.5% error rate and humans an average 5%), but the errors are widespread and would result in mass simultaneous failure. Explosive swarms are a great humanitarian threat, they are less centralized and controlled as regular UAVs, and so they are more unpredictable and can cause more unnecessary collateral damage. Another significant issue is AI that is biased, AI can assume prejudicial information if the data set given to it is biased, or if it inaccurately identifies a nonexistent trend. For example, a facial recognition AI operated almost perfectly with white males, but had a 20% failure rate with black females, such biases raise humanitarian concerns regarding any enemy-targeting system. Exacerbating these problems, AI struggles with 'explainability', meaning even experts cannot

understand what exactly the code running the AI means, making repairing any issues harder. LAWs are by far the greatest humanitarian issue; it is the lack of human control that makes AI so dangerous and unpredictable. Many experts argue that to prevent a terrible catastrophe, all forms of LAWs should be banned. The argument for AI-controlled weapons should be considered, as it would lead to the prevention of human loss, since the implementation of AI in warfare could preemptively replace many soldiers in combat.

Involved Countries and Organizations

United Nations Involvement

As it stands, the UN has yet to enact any legislation that deals directly with LAWS. Further, the significance of most past publications have been largely symbolic, without any tangible impact on their future development of LAWS. However, the 1945 Charter of the United Nations grants DISEC the mandate to pass resolutions about weapons that undermine international safety—LAWS among them.

The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols

Only the fourth Geneva Convention and Additional Protocols I and II have implicitly addressed the issue of LAWS by outlining the laws of warfare that autonomous weapons might violate. One specific tenet of such international humanitarian law outlined by the International Committee of the Red Cross reads, “It is forbidden to kill or injure an enemy who surrenders. [...] Parties to a conflict shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants in order to spare civilian population and property.” Thus, if scientists and member state governments are unable to demonstrate the ability of autonomous weapons to distinguish innocent people from hostile parties in all settings and circumstances, a total ban could be justifiably placed on autonomous weapons. Any resolutions adopted must align with the provisions set out in these Conventions.

Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW)

The CCW’s full title is the Convention on Prohibitions, or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. It, alongside its three annexed Protocols, took effect starting December 2, 1983. To date, there are 125 state parties to the Convention, who gather each year at the Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to review its progress and status. Although the CCW has the jurisdiction to pass legally binding resolutions, its decision-making process requires a consensus to proceed. For this reason, United States of America, United Kingdom, Russia, Israel, South Korea, and Australia have been able to oppose total bans on LAWS and stall any further discussion on the topic. In addition to regular meetings, the CCW hosted three informal expert meetings regarding LAWS from 2014 to 2016 and agreed to establish a Group of Governmental

Experts (GGE) to further delve into the topic at their final meeting in April 2016. Contrastingly, a message relayed to member states at the March 2019 meeting of the GGE, UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated, “machines with the power and discretion to take lives without human involvement are politically unacceptable, morally repugnant and should be prohibited by international law.” Although the convention has succeeded in hosting a forum of discussion surrounding LAWS, it has not made any substantive progress in controlling their development aside from condemning them.

UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)

UNIDIR began to research LAWS with respect to international disarmament and security in 2013. Since then, it has published multiple reports outlining the issue of LAWS to inform both member states and the general public of controversies surrounding LAWS. These have included audio files of expert presentations, general observations, and documents outlining the moral and technical issues (particularly, risks and machine bias) brought about by LAWS. Moreover, UNIDIR has made several recommendations to refocus the debate surrounding LAWS, including the introduction of additional variables, characteristics of LAWS, and the nature of automation itself. On May 13, 2014, Kerstin Vignard— the Chief of Operations at UNIDIR— delivered a report at the CCW Meeting of Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems explaining that UNIDIR’s purpose was not to “offer specific policy recommendations,” but rather to “help policy-makers think about autonomy, to challenge assumptions and to ask better questions of themselves and others.”

United States of America

On the whole, the US has proven that it is a global leader in the autonomous weapon sector. Most prominently, the US and the UK are the only countries that have begun the process of formulating policies about lethal autonomous weapons. In November 2012, the US Department of Defense passed a directive that widened the possibility for a legal framework surrounding the development and deployment process of autonomous weapons while emphasizing the protection of innocent citizens. The US also possesses the MQ-1 Predator Drone, which contains a multitude of offensive capabilities (such as hellfire missiles). This unmanned aircraft has been used in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bosnia, Serbia, Iraq, Yemen, Libya,and Somalia to date. Given their past efforts in developing and deploying LAWS, it is unlikely that United States of America would support banning them altogether

China

China’s foreign policy is exceptional–while it has expressed interest in negotiating an additional protocol to “ban the use of fully autonomous lethal weapons systems,” it is against downright preventing the development of LAWS.34 In other words, although China is currently not interested in using LAWS in combat, they want to continue developing them. In 2018, Ding Xiangrong, the Deputy Director of the General Office at the Chinese Central Military

Commission, also explained their objective of engaging in the "ongoing military revolution… centred on information technology and intelligent technology", alluding to their intention to use them in the future.

European Union

Most European countries have publicly declared their intention to ban LAWS in light of international humanitarian obligations. The European Parliament has also expressed an interest in enforcing review and approval processes for new weapons. United Kingdom has acted divergently from this policy by recognizing the various benefits that LAWS can pose, although it has produced several of its own autonomous weapon systems and opposed internationally binding bans on LAWS.

African Union

Algeria, Egypt, Ghana, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and South Africa were among the first countries to advocate for a ban on LAWS. Moreover, on April 9, 2018, member states of the African Group called for a legally binding framework on LAWS, stating that "fully autonomous weapons systems or LAWS that are not under human control should be banned." These countries include: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles,In reality, African states are just as threatened by LAWS in the context of national security as other global powers. The looming presence of ethnic violence, civil wars, terrorism, and various insurgencies make LAWS an even bigger threat in countries like Nigeria, Somalia, and South Sudan, among others. Given that several non-state actors have already gained access to autonomous weapons without the presence of any legal and regulatory frameworks, it is evident that further action is promptly needed. Not only is their possession of such dangerous weapons a symbolic threat, but also a threat to international safety as they cannot be easily held accountable for atrocities committed in warfare— especially given ceaseless turmoil in the areas they operate. Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, among others.

Questions to Consider

- What are the obstacles that stand in the way of productive discussion surrounding LAWS? How can they be resolved?
- How are LAWS relevant to current international humanitarian obligations?
- How much human oversight is necessary for LAWS to function properly? In the case ofmachine error, who would be at fault?
- What are the advantages that LAWS can offer in combat that humans cannot? What are thedisadvantages?
- In what situations, if any, could LAWS be justifiably deployed?
- What specific regulations could be implemented to reap the benefits of AI while curbingpotential conflict?
- Looking at existing committees and organizations, how can the UN more efficiently addressAI problems as they arise?

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