Video Message

By

Angela Kane
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

CCW Meeting of Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems

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I am pleased to welcome all delegations and participants to this second meeting of experts on lethal autonomous weapon systems. I also wish to congratulate Ambassador Michael Biontino on his appointment as chair of this meeting.

Over the past two years, this issue has evolved rapidly from the realm of science-fiction to a serious international concern. This is fitting given prevailing trends – which include the rapid pace of technological development and the increasing automation of military systems. It is now well established that the advent of autonomous weapons raises wider concerns pertaining to international humanitarian law, ethics, human rights, as well as to broader questions of international peace and security.

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons remains the primary forum to consider many of these concerns. In this regard, a key point of reference is reflected in the Convention’s preamble. The Martens Clause in particular serves to remind us that until we have abolished war as a feature of international relations, new developments must always be seen through the lens of our common principles.

In taking forward these discussions, States Parties have to be prepared to address questions such as:

- How are autonomous technologies currently being used in weapons systems and armed conflicts?
- What level of human supervision is required to ensure that the use of autonomous weapons systems is in compliance with international humanitarian law, specifically the rules of distinction, proportionality and precautions in attack?
- In the context of autonomous weapons systems, what other emerging technologies in weapons systems does the CCW need to address?

It also remains important to consider the benefits of increasing transparency in the reviews that all States must undertake to ensure that any new weapon they acquire is compatible with international humanitarian law.

In closing, I must also acknowledge the critical role played by civil society, especially the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots and its many constituents, in driving international attention to this issue.

I wish you a fruitful meeting.